RECENT PERSPECTIVES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

RECENT PERSPECTIVES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

Editor
ROMILA THAPAR

In Association with
The Book Review Trust, New Delhi

POPULAR PRAKASHAN
BOMBAY

POPULAR PRAKASHAN PVT. LTD.
35-C Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya Marg
Tardeo, Bombay 400034

Introduction

The collection of essays in this volume is intended to draw the attention of students to some of the recent research on various aspects of early Indian history. It can also be read by the more discerning general reader interested in probing the early history of India. The idea originated in the course of a discussion with my colleagues at the Centre for Historical Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University. The volume was visualized as a collective effort of those who are engaged in the teaching and designing of courses focusing on different aspects of early Indian history. Our purpose was to put together chapters which grew out of annotated bibliographies and which we thought might be useful to those who are either unaware of recent advances in the subject or who have little access to them.

The contributors to this volume have understood the term 'recent' to mean the last three decades. References to earlier standard works have been largely omitted. Such omission is not because we do not regard them as important but because we are concerned here primarily with publications of the last thirty years.

The focus of each chapter is on the new trends in research in particular fields. An attempt has been made to introduce the key concepts which have now entered the study of early Indian history, as, for example, material culture, state formation, urbanization, linguistic area, typologies of societies and social formations, belief systems and ideologies. Situations associated with historical change have received more attention

since the nature of change has often been neglected in past studies. Some use of the comparative method has been made, with reference to source material and to ways of using the concepts developed in the study of other societies. Source material available from archaeology and epigraphy is now being incorporated in new ways into historical analysis. Clearly, in such a vast coverage of time and space it is not possible to refer to all the publications, even those of importance. A selection has of necessity had to be made and those works which have encouraged new trends in historical interpretation have been preferred. Each chapter includes a bibliography. This is not intended to be exhaustive and refers to those publications which contain new data and/or point towards changing existing interpretations.

The chapters do not conform to any established scheme of periodization. At one level they represent divisions that were found to be the most convenient in terms of the expertise available and for purposes of writing, but at another level there has been some recognition of major social formations which point to significant themes in historical perspectives. Where periodization based on these has been adopted, there are some chronological divisions. A degree of overlapping in the chapters is inevitable since a single theme can be viewed from various perspectives. Some differences of opinion are also possible since each contributor has his or her reading of history. It is not our intention to project a single point of view. There are obviously different ways of looking at the evidence with varying priorities and differing theories of causation and explanation. What is required is a familiarity with the sources and a reasonable level of logic and rationality in the explanation. The views of the authors are expressed in their understanding of these.

We have not divided the chapters into regional history and have preferred to treat some themes chronologically. The boundaries of regions change over time and the region is in any case more visible as a geographical unit. Nor have we attempted to cover every part of the subcontinent since our purpose is more to underline the interpretational perspective rather than to cover the history of every region.

There is little that has been startlingly new on dynastic

history in the last three decades. Some discovery of new sources of evidence, particularly inscriptions, have marginally changed earlier views. Our emphasis is therefore on society, economy and historical change in the broadest sense. These earlier tended to be neglected but have come into focus in recent historical writings. We have included comments on the impact of environment and ecology where relevant, as also the insights from historical geography.

The perspective therefore also points to how history has gradually come to be regarded as a social science. One aspect of this, demonstrated in some of the essays, is the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach. This is more evident in discussions which refer to concepts such as state formation and urbanization. Such an approach involves not only a close familiarity with the sources but also some understanding of the methods with which other disciplines concerned with such concepts analyze their data. The use of such methods can lead to fresh questions and presentation of new perspectives in relation to historical data. However, while there is no indiscriminate use of such methods, even those chapters which are not specifically interdisciplinary do refer to ideas in the context of approaches of different kinds to the sources.

The interdisciplinary approach expressed in these essays is indicative of a new direction in historical research which has moved away from the framework of the dominant Orientalist scholarship of the nineteenth century as well as the more simplistic facets of the nationalist scholarship of the twentieth century. It bears the imprint of recent theoretical views on comprehending the functioning of Indian society in the past. This historiographical change has introduced many innovations in the study of history.

August, 1993   Romila Thapar

Contents

Notes on Contributors

All the contributors are or were associated with the Centre for Historical Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Shereen Ratnagar: specialises in the protohistoric archaeology of India and the history of ancient Mesopotamia. Her research interests are in early states, trade and urbanism.

K. Meenakshi: works on areal linguistics, and on the ancient Indian grammatical tradition and Sanskrit syntax.

Romila Thapar: has an interest in the social and cultural history of early India and in historiography.

H. P. Ray: works on early historical trade in India and on maritime contacts with Southeast Asia.

Kunal Chakrabarti: is interested in the social history of religion and mythology.

Rajan Gurukkal: specialises in the early history of south India and is particularly interested in the question of social formationas.

R. Champakalakshmi: has written on south Indian History and her special interests are in urbanisation, the links between religion and society and in historical geography.

B. D. Chattopadhyaya: is interested in exploring the history of early medieval India.

I

Archaeological Perspectives on Early Indian Societies

SHEREEN RATNAGAR

I begin with a couple of preliminaries so that the student may have some idea of what to expect from this chapter. First, archaeology is not a realm of drama and romance, nor is it rooted in 'hard data' and scientific precision. No archaeological site in South Asia is like the town of Pompeii, where life at one moment of time was, as it were, sealed and encapsulated by the flow of volcanic lava. At most sites the archaeologist is dealing with objects discarded in the course of activities by the people who lived, quarried, feasted or worshipped at those sites. We do find deliberate interment of objects in sanctuary deposits, or in graves, or as hoards of valuables secreted away under house floors. But for the most part archaeology is a kind of garbage inspection. The garbage of the past survives burial in mounds at differential rates, depending on its physical properties. Further the sherds of a broken pot will most likely be discarded as garbage because an earthen pot can easily be replaced, whereas a broken copper axe may be melted down and recast into an object because copper is not as freely available as mud. Second, excavated house floors, storage pots or iron daggers are tangible, measurable and quantifiable entities, but are not 'facts which speak for themselves.' Outside the context in which they were found, they mean little. Archaeological data accrue from the study of the attributes or properties of excavated phenomena and from their context, so that inference is inevitable. Unless these basic principles are kept in mind, students will have the most unrealistic expectations of

1

excavated material.

In this review of work over the last two decades on the protohistory of the Indian subcontinent, one had to be highly selective. Instead of highlighting exciting archaeological discoveries or primary studies of artefacts, this chapter reports on writings which offer interesting interpretations of the data (although the two can never be tidily separated) in social and economic terms. But even in this field of interest, an exhaustive survey has not been possible. Nor is it indeed the aim of the review. If some works have been omitted it is not because they are insignificant.[1]

We will take this discussion by stages and cultures, in a general chronological progression. But let us start with recent work on the interaction between cultures at different stages of development, or contacts between groups with contrasting methods of land use. The flaked stone tool technology of late hunter-gatherers persisted in the subcontinent not only among neolithic or early farming cultures, but also in the bronze age, in the cities of the Indus valley. In the more advanced cultures, however, early tool forms such as blades often had no retouch or were made in substantial numbers, so that neither direct continuities with late stone age technology, nor direct exchanges of these tools between surviving groups of hunters and farming societies, can be imputed. Yet in several instances stratified late stone age material is accompanied by bones of domesticated animals, or by pottery or metal tools, which hunters could not themselves have made. F. R. and B. Allchin in a rather original study address themselves to both phenomena. They compare the relative frequencies of

1. There will be no references here to inferences from archaeology on the language or race of past groups, simply because it is now realized that there is no connection between a group's material remains and the language (s) spoken by that group. Neither does language have anything to do with races—with biological groupings of people according to specific, genetically transmitted traits such as blood groups (and not elements like skin colour or facial features!)—a concept whose validity has come into question because all human groups have always been in a state of biological change. The 'problem' of the origins or movements of Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Munda languages is primarily a linguistic problem : archaeological data can only verify that there could have been contacts between regions, or movements through them, in particular periods.

blades and hunting tools at several sites, mesolithic, neolithic and chalcolithic,[2] and show that between the late hunting and chalcolithic stages there is a very marked fall in the proportion of points and barbs used as projectiles in hunting. When bones of wild animals occur at farming sites, we need not infer that hunting remained an integral part of subsistence. Small groups of hunters and gatherers may have lived amongst agricultural villages, offering meat in exchange for farmers' products. V. N. Misra gives a resume' of all sites with the stone tools of hunters and gatherers where contact with pottery- metal- or glass-using people is attested. He suggests that hunter-gatherers have survived till today only because they have, over the centuries, adapted themselves to more advanced technologies.

In mesolithic cave sites in the Kurnool area M. L. K. Murty (1985b) likewise found bones of domesticated animals and chalcolithic potsherds which must have originated among neighbouring agricultural communities. He suggests that farmers may have driven their animals up to the caves. He suggests that bones of wild animals at the neighbouring farming site of Ramapuram do not necessarily point to farmers engaging in hunting. The spread of farming may have restricted the mobility of hunting bands, forcing them into marginal enclaves, and as a response new strategies may have been adopted by the latter, for example, exchanges with farmers.

The orthodox barriers of archaeological method and subject-matter are now rapidly breaking down. Murty and G. D. Sontheimer studied the oral traditions of the mobile Kuruvā pastoralists of the southern Deccan, especially the mythological material on their chief deity, which reveals that some time

---

2. The mesolithic, or in India the Late Stone Age, is the terminal hunting-gathering stage. It follows the palaeolithic or Old Stone Age. The neolithic is the stage of early village life or domestication of plants and animals. When prehistoric farmers begin to use metal (copper) in a small way the stage is called the chalcolithic, although there is little change in basic social or economic structures between the neolithic and the chalcolithic stages. When, however, we use the term bronze age we generally mean a stage when there are specialist producers of metal and other products in society, that is, the earliest stage of social complexity. Thus where South Asia is concerned the bronze age is the age of the Harappan Civilization.

in the past a pastoral group fissioned off from agricultural mainstream communities and that pastoral-agricultural relationships had inbuilt antagonisms. This provides a lead to the problem of the forms of pastoralism in neolithic and megalithic peninsular India : in exploring whether animal herding was initially a specialized form of land use, or whether specialization was only a development consequent on the spread of agriculture.

After millennia of success as hunters and food-gatherers people settled down to village life as farmers or farmers and stock breeders. It cannot be coincidental that this process of settling down and tending such domesticates as wheat, barley, cattle, sheep and goat—species whose wild ancestors had a wide though discontinuous distribution through the uplands of Asia from Turkey to Afghanistan and which were to constitute the subsistence base of bronze age civilizations as far east as the Indus plains—is first attested in South Asia at a site in a frontier region, Mehrgarh (from 6000 B. C.). Mehrgarh lies at the foot of the major highway down the Bolan Pass and has produced, from its earliest levels, stones and shells originating in very distant regions. The literature on this cultural transition relates more to excavated finds and their connections with elements from Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan (and from other sites in Baluchistan and the Indus plains in the later periods of Mehrgarh), than with the actual processes of domestication and their ecological implications.[3] We still lack details on the distribution of the wild ancestors of the plant and animal domesticates of Mehrgarh in the frontier region. R. Meadow discusses the patterns of animal exploitation in this crucial phase. Cattle and sheep herds being bred in captivity may occasionally have been replenished with young beasts captured from wild populations near Mehrgarh. But wild goat herds would have ranged

---

3.   The neolithic transition involved less a technological revolution than one in land use. If hunting and gathering flourished for thousands of years, what made people become farmers and herders? That is, why and how did the relation of people to certain plant and animal species change so radically that these species were biologically transformed? Only an ecological approach can provide the answers.

too far from the site for periodic raids on them, and the earliest goat bones at Mehrgarh, though morphologically wild, may represent animals bred in captivity. But what of wheat and barley? One assumes that as wild grasses the wheats, at least, grew at appreciable distances from the site. So we need to know whether the earliest sheep and goat herding entailed mobility of men and flocks, and how this in turn could have been connected with the introduction of cereal crops at Mehrgarh. Compared with the wealth of discussion on domestication processes and strategies in western Asia, there is a marked absence of such work on South Asia.

There was no particular period in South Asia when hunters and gatherers took to agriculture and animal-rearing. The neolithic stage appeared in different regions at different times, in each case with a unique stone and ceramic technology and range of domesticates. Good summaries of various regions are provided by B. K. Thapar. Clearly not all neolithic economies were based on species locally domesticated. Neolithic cultures in the Jhelum valley and in the Garo and North Cachar Hills exhibit a frontier character, with artefactual links with cultures outside the subcontinent (Pande 1970, Narain 1979, Dikshit 1982). On the other hand, in Orissa we may have mingling of traditions from the northeast and the Deccan plateau. Detailed characterizations of the different cultures, however, cannot be made as in some cases we rely on undated surface finds and in some instances we lack faunal and botanical evidence on the nature of economy. Like the Kachhi plain, the region comprising the Belan valley at the edge of the Vindhya plateau and the adjoining Ganga plain around Allahabad is an important zone. For here we have a sequence of sites from the terminal palaeolithic to the mesolithic and early neolithic, and there is evidence for the local domestication of rice and humped cattle. The dates of the transition are however controversial. The reader interested in this geographically transitional zone is referred to G. R. Sharma's regional study of the area from the neolithic to the iron age.

The earliest stage of settled village life in the peninsula is marked by a number of sites in northern Karnataka and in regions farther south and east. Here *ragi* and horse gram

were perhaps locally domesticated, but not so cattle, sheep and goat. Aspects of the neolithic culture and internal differentiations within this province are discussed by K. Paddayya (1973) and B. Narasimhaiah. What has unfortunately not been followed up is F. R. Allchin's early hypothesis (1963) on the Deccan ash mounds (of the same cultural horizon, the ash formed by the burning of accumulated animal dung) — in the sense of the forms cattle keeping could have taken at this stage. Could it have been a sector within a generalized mixed farming economy, or is it possible that animal herding was specialized? It would be useful to know the relative importance of cattle versus sheep and goat at several sites and to work out the spatial correlation between the ash mounds and neolithic village sites. (See also Paddayya 1991-92).

We also need to work on the gradual development of the crop map of South Asia : not only to study where a crop was first domesticated or introduced [F. R. Allchin (1969) makes a general survey and G. Possehl (1986) gives a summary on millets] but also to study environmental and soil implications; and to see how crop patterns evolved into the historical period. For no simple environmental determinism can explain the location and character of the neolithic cultures. We cannot say that those regions of South Asia with the best soils or the highest rural population densities today were the first to develop farming economies. Many technological and historical factors are involved. We may find that the present day staples of a region (say *rāgī* in northern Tamil Nadu or *bājrā* in Kathiawad) go as far back as the proto-historic period, but at the same time the earliest farming in Maharashtra did not rely on *jowār* and *bājrā* cultivation as does farming today in this region. For many parts of South Asia we still have no evidence about early patterns of land use. In regions with heavy rainfall and soils liable to erosion or leaching, for example, the west coast and the northeastern hills, land use will have been of the shifting cultivation type. This entails small and shifting settlements and dispersed populations, so that we will not find sites in the form of mounds, but the importance of shifting cultivation cannot be ignored. Again, little attention has been paid

to early land use in the western desert. If, as is now believed, the Harappans had only passing acquaintance with the camel—that too the two-humped Central Asian type—when was the dromedary introduced in Rajasthan, and what were the implications for human mobility, the development of routes, and demography?

Thanks to the long occupation and stratigraphic sequence of Mehrgarh and its artefactual correlations with other sites in Baluchistan and Sind, we have for the northwestern region a continuous archaeological progression from the beginning of the village economy to the threshold of the Harappan Civilization. But let the reader not infer that we are anywhere near an understanding of how and why this urban civilization took its particular form. The general laws of history and anthropology tell us that urbanism is not possible without a state level of political organization : but there are states and states. We do not know how a Harappan ruling class came to power, by what methods it mobilized surplus, or how it ordered relations between say Mohenjo-daro and Kalibangan. We are not even sure that there was one state rather than several autonomous but interacting states. Unless we work out some outline ideas about these aspects, we will not be able to read the progression of archaeological cultures in any meaningful way. So far such studies have had a limited scope.

When M. R. Mughal discusses the transition between the immediately antecedent period and the urban period, he does so strictly within the framework of the artefactual components of both, and finds strong continuities between the periods in ceramics, the use of exotic materials, wheeled transport, and so on. Thus he terms the antecedent Sothi/Siswal and Kot Dijian complex as the formative—Early Harappan—period. F. R. Allchin (1982) too finds that characteristic traits of the urban period, including the basic subsistence economy, are present in early form in the 'Early Harappan.' Like Mughal he stresses that this antecedent phase, with great similarities of artefactual types across the Sothi, Amri and Kot Diji horizons, must have seen intensified interactions between societies, and also increasing political control. But he points out that there are changes in the spread of sites over the

map, in the scale of monumental architecture, and in craft production. Neither Mughal nor Allchin explain how the establishment of the technological foundations, or intensified interregional interactions of the preceding periods, anticipate the phenomenon of urbanism. Continuities in domestic artefacts and rural technologies between prestate and state periods are to be expected unless we were to anthropomorphize archaeological remains and interpret Harappan artefacts at older-occupied sites as meaning that one population replaced another. Continuities in artefactual traditions aside (and I suspect that analysis of metallurgy across the two periods will reveal not continuity but a striking disconformity), what we need to know is in what way the intrusion of Mature Harappan traits at a site founded in an earlier period represents the imposition of state institutions over a community.

The nature of the transition will also become clearer if particular aspects of change are studied in depth, as for example has been done by M. Lechevallier, B. Allchin (1979) and J. H. Cleland with flaked stone tools. These studies reveal a reduced reliance on stone in the urban period and indicate that flaked stone tool kits became more standardized, that the tools received less frequent retouch and were utilized in a narrower range of functions, probably as a response to greater reliance on copper and bronze tools. More studies are required on these lines, for example to explore the antecedents of Harappan bead-making or shell work.

As regards the character of the Harappan civilization itself, interpretative work has gravitated to a few aspects with the surprising neglect of others. There are dozens of claims to the decipherment of the script, most of them based on unscientific methods and several verging on the ridiculous, but not one detailed analysis is available of the distribution and possible ways of utilization of the seals and sealings.

We have not yet explicated just what we mean when we refer to a site as Mature Harappan. There is a whole range of artefact types which we assume to be 'typical': a particular kind of pottery, a limited range of metal tools, bricks of particular size and proportions, cart and wheel models, terracotta cakes, chert weights, long chert blades, a

distinctive form of seal with script, and so on. But this entire list does not occur at all in the excavated Harappan sites, and there are other traits at some sites. Little progress will be made in interpretation unless it is worked out which are the core elements which occur with higher frequencies across the sites or attempts are made to explain the restricted distribution of seals and weights at only some sites. So far M. Fentress alone has addressed herself to similarities and variance in the artefacts from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. She leads us to an initial question : why building materials and methods, metal techniques, weights and seals are similar between the two sites, whereas there are contrasts in figurative art, in death ritual, or in the shapes of metal vessels. Some scholars insist on the uniformity of Harappan material culture, and others scoff at this as only an impressionistic idea, but no one has worked on the specifics for even a handful of excavated sites, even where just pottery is concerned. And we have an important question yet to answer : Why are household pots similar across the Harappan cities and villages? There is no law of social evolution which insists on a coincidence between political boundaries and ceramic horizons. Unless we were again to anthropomorphize pottery and state that 'the Harappans came to Makran' because we have Harappan pottery there (such 'wave' theories surely depend on an exceptional capacity for proliferation on the part of the 'Harappan' population), we cannot escape the problem of how state organization was involved with potters and pottery production.

For interpreting Harappan land use the first stimulus was given by W. A. Fairservis who investigated man-land relationships around Mohenjo-daro. Having estimated the population of the city (these figures, and the size of Mohenjo-daro, now need to be revised), and the proportion of non-food producers resident there, Fairservis calculates the caloric requirements for the population and the acreage required to produce the grain portion of these requirements. This done, he calculates the number of cattle needed for dairy produce and field preparation. The more cattle in use, the greater would have been the fodder requirements, so that extension of fields under food crops would in turn have been limited. If it was

necessary for Harappan cattle to forage in riverine or scrub forest in Sind, this may have led to deforestation.

L. S. Leshnik (1973) in an article with a wider frame of reference pointed our attention to the varying land use patterns on the Indus alluvium and was the first to point to the necessity for lift irrigation in some Harappan areas. For a recent collation of the crops used in Harappan subsistence, the reader is referred to Vishnu-Mittre and R. Savithri. Developing on Leshnik's remarks about lift irrigation I have put out a suggestion that Harappan agriculture was largely dependent on lift irrigation and therefore highly labour-intensive, which might explain why the urban fraction was much lower than in contemporary Mesopotamia (Ratnagar 1986). Possehl (1979) cautions us not to view Harappan subsistence exclusively in terms of agriculture. Referring to large unoccupied spaces on the Harappan map and to the fact that mobile pastoralists leave few archaeological traces, he suggests that pastoralists would have lived in symbiosis with agriculturists and would have provided the linkages (as carriers of goods or information) between settlements, thus contributing to the uniformity of material culture. The discovery of possible pastoral camp sites in the Hakra valley and in northern Gujarat (see Kuldeep Bhan 1989) indicates that the pastoral sector may well have been important.

Observations on the most humble of artefact types have thrown light on Harappan life. B. Allchin (1982) shows that baked clay pellets or cakes could have served many functions, including that of projectiles in warfare. If large quantities occur at a site on the Gomal pass, we might have evidence for the camp of a Harappan army during its assault on Rahman Dheri (or Gumla) and significant information on how such an army was equipped. Similarly, R. K. Pant's microwear analysis on Harappan chert blades shows that at least one function they served was harvesting. If we refer back to Cleland's work, already cited, where it was inferred that Kot Diji exported these blades, we have to ask why harvesting equipment was part of a distribution pattern through the realm—surely harvesting tools had been developed and used for centuries before the Harappan period—but not, for example, miniature faience vessels. One also wishes

that a study could be undertaken of the sizes and findspots of the scored goblets, to suggest their function and assess whether they could have had any connection with distribution processes.

Another focused study we may cite is that by A. Kesarwani (1984) on the architecture of gateways at those Harappan sites where perimeter walls have been traced. Kesarwani asks whether military functions may be inferred in cases where gateways are wide and devoid of adjoining guard rooms.

Where Harappan crafts are concerned, in recent years K. T. M. Hegde et al. (1982) have worked out a possible process for the manufacture of the wafer-thin micro beads of steatite paste. Meanwhile metallurgy has received some attention (Bhardwaj 1970, Agrawal 1971, Hegde 1978). The main issues are the paucity of tin and arsenic alloys and frequent use of pure copper; the lack of evidence for the use of copper versus bronze for distinct tool types; and absence of a metal technology in subsistence production.

Pride of place must however go to J. M. Kenoyer's extensive and intensive studies (1984) on shell work : on the identification and sources of the different shells used in Harappan crafts, on debitage at shell working sites as evidence for processes and quantum of bangle or ladle production, and on different types of shell artefacts and their distribution. Kenoyer finds a basic similarity in tools and manufacturing methods at the production sites, as well as in decorations of the bangles and the forms of the ladles. On the other hand, little has been done on the technology of faience production. This may have been the highest skilled and most labour-intensive of Harappan crafts, and among other things we need to know whether the technology survived the Harappan civilization or died with it.

Art historians alone have been able to highlight the cosmopolitan character of Mohenjo-daro, where figurines in a rich spectrum of styles and subject matter indicate that there were several modes of expression of a variety of magico-religious thoughts or beliefs (for example E.C.L. During Caspers 1979). A. Ardeleanu-Jansen's careful analysis (1983) of ten stone sculptures, unique to Mohenjo-daro, all from late

contexts, and many deliberately smashed in antiquity, might become a start in the search for royal symbols or an 'iconography of kingship.'

So much has been written on the Harappan overseas trade to the Gulf and Mesopotamia that it would be self-defeating to single out a few studies as representative. One can only highlight the key issues and describe how the picture has changed with recent discoveries in the last few years. It is abundantly clear that in the third millennium B. C. there was a kind of 'world' economy, with metals, stones, timbers and craft items moving between South Asia, Makran, southern Iran, the Oman peninsula, Bahrain, Kuwait and Sumer. A network of several interaction spheres encompasses these regions in the mid-third millennium. But in earlier centuries there were more marked interactions between Central Asia, Afghanistan, Seistan and north Baluchistan and the Indus plains. According to G. F. Dales (1977) the chronological coincidence of the shift of interaction spheres and the rise of the Harappan civilization cannot have been accidental. Can we link a flourishing external trade with the emergence of a ruling class and urban centres in South Asia? We must work out whether external trade led to increased acquisition of status items on the part of aristocracies, or whether trade led to increased productivity. It is possible that external trade induced some changes in labour allocation, for example, the emergence of craft workshops to produce items for export, which may in turn have induced changes in the geographic location of certain production activities, so that a regional economy came into being : chert blades and shell items were produced at only a few Harappan sites but are found at several sites; shells were exported westwards; craft quarters at Chanhu-daro and Lothal seem to reveal 'workshop'-type situations. To what extent were these phenomena responses to the demand for Harappan goods in Mesopotamia?

In the last few years a Harappan presence has been detected in copper-rich Oman (pottery, beads, inscribed sherds, weights and so on) in post-2000 B. C. contexts. It has been suggested that when the Mesopotamian-Harappan trade began, societies in the Gulf were under Mesopotamian cultural influence, but that after 2000 B. C. they came increas-

ingly under Harappan influence. The chronology of some Dilmun sites is being reworked and it may be that Bahrain saw the peak of its settlement and prosperity—and Harappan influence—around this period of transition (Cleuziou 1986, Cleuziou and Tosi 1989, Weisgerber 1984). In trying to explain this change we may derive more clues to the organization of the trade from the Harappan end.

A major aspect of the Harappan decline was a large-scale desertion of settlements. Perhaps this is the reason why several attempts to explain the decline are in literal terms, invoking floods, lowered sea levels, deforestation, tectonic movements, increasing aridity, invasions by Aryans, and so on. Some of these arguments are reprinted in the collection of papers edited by Possehl (1978). That Egyptian civilization survived repeated and severe oscillations in the rhythm of the Nile and its floods, that Mesopotamian civilization flourished long centuries after severe salinity problems had caused a decline in agricultural productivity in the south, that Egypt and Mesopotamia saw repeated invasions by alien peoples, has not deterred us in our insistence on these holocaust-level explanations. No explanation has resorted to political or economic causes, simply because the political and economic organization of Harappan society has not been investigated.

This in itself is surprising because as early as 1968 S.C. Malik made a landmark contribution to Harappan studies with a focused and systematic discussion on the level of social development presented by the civilization in terms of cultural anthropology. Malik cautioned us on how to view the question of surplus mobilization, and what was the historical import of planned cities. He is also the first scholar to offer an acceptable explanation for the uniformity of material culture, namely, the voluntary incorporation of various folk communities into the Harappan political system and system of regional exchanges or distribution. One may not agree with him concerning the absence of government or concerning the role of ideology as the integrating factor, but it is a shame that his book has not provoked further attempts to break the barriers between archaeology and cultural anthropology, or convinced scholars that Harappan society cannot be interpreted by reference to the twentieth century

world of their own experience.

Lack of clarity in defining the Mature Harappan has also had a fallout in terms of confusion about the successor cultures. In some parts of the Harappan area, for example, the Hakra heartland, most settlements were deserted and post-Harappan cultural assemblages have been identified at other sites, so it is possible that people moved to new villages up the Sutlej-Yamuna divide, where more post-urban sites are in evidence; and we expect to find traits of the Mature Harappan in the later cultures. But the latter did not develop in a vacuum. To lump all post-urban phenomena in the Hakra, Punjab, Ganga-Yamuna Doab, Kathiawad and north Gujarat and even the Tapi valley as 'Late Harappan' on the basis of stray and disparate traits (often only remotely derivable from the Mature Harappan tradition) is quite unsatisfactory. A. Ghosh (1982) points out that the so-called Late Harappan in the Punjab and the Sutlej-Yamuna divide is marked by the survival of the autochthonous Sothi and Bara traditions and that towards the Yamuna the Ochre Colour Pottery tradition was an element in these assemblages, so that the 'Late Harappan took different hues in different parts of its diffusion and it cannot be regarded as homogeneous'; and one may not use the term Late Harappan without acknowledging the differences. B. B. Lal (1982) has criticized some of the alleged derivations from the Mature Harappan of later culture traits and he also points to a mixing of diverse traditions in the successor cultures. Moreover, he points out that if we uncritically ascribe the sources of diverse traits to the Mature Harappan, an erroneous picture is created of a continuity between the Indus valley and Ganga valley urbanizations.

H. D. Sankalia (1972-73) shows that the Cemetery-H successor culture in the middle reaches of the Indus system is known mainly from funerary ceramics, but points to the kinds of information derivable from the ceramics. (Since his piece was written Mughal has identified several habitation and camp sites of the Cemetery-H horizon in the Hakra valley.) For cultural and settlement pattern changes between the pre-and post-urban periods, and the importance of the Sutlej-Yamuna divide in terms of cultural, chronological and

geographic transition between Indus and Ganga, the reader is referred to the works of Suraj Bhan (1973) and J. C. Shaffer (1981). In a more comprehensive discussion Possehl (1977) asks what the termination of Mature Harappan culture could have meant in historical terms—the end of urbanism but not of civilization. He contrasts in outline the nature of the urban to the post-urban transition in Sind, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat. Possehl (1980) has worked out the changes in numbers, sizes, and locations of settlements between the Mature Harappan and Rangpur III phases in Saurashtra and suggests that post-urban proliferation of small villages in the dry zones may have had to do with the introduction of *bājrā* as the staple crop, or the sedentarization of hunters, or else repeated shifts from mobile pastoralism to settled agriculture. J. F. Jarrige and M. U. Hassan, meanwhile, discuss significant movements in Baluchistan around 2000 B. C.

After the Harappan civilization we have a sequence of chalcolithic cultures which span the second millennium B. C. and extend geographically from the Banas and Berach basins northeast of Udaipur, through Malwa, and into western Maharashtra up to the Bhima valley. Stratigraphy at key sites such as Dangwada and Kayatha near Ujjain, and Daimabad on the Pravara, shows that the Kayatha culture was succeeded by the Banas, Malwa and Jorwe cultures in turn. These horizons exhibit some similarities in subsistence economies, house form, flaked stone tool kits, the paucity of ground stone axes, and the limited use of copper (although at Ahar a heavy reliance on copper and evidence for rice make the Banas horizon here somewhat distinct from the rest). The ceramics however are distinct. Thus it is possible to consider a process of cultural development and transmission of ideas for about a millennium along the important marchland of west-central India, which gave access to the productive basins of the Krishna and Tungabhadra where settlements of the 'southern neolithic' were flourishing.

M. K. Dhavalikar (1973) in tracing the genesis of the Deccan chalcolithic traditions argues that the Jorwe culture derived certain elements like burial practices or particular ceramics from Karnataka, but is an internal development out of the Malwa culture. Dhavalikar (1979) and Sankalia (1973a)

both accept the possibility of the colonization of the Malwa region by bearers of the Kayatha culture, and of Maharashtra from the Malwa region. The Malwa culture in turn bears certain southern neolithic elements, ceramic traits of Rangpur III-affiliated sites of Gujarat, and possibly aspects of ceramic technology of Banas vintage.

Each of the four horizons has a distinct distribution on the map and occupies a contiguous area, and there are overlaps in their spread. But we cannot draw too neat a picture of four distinct cultures evolving one from the other. For example, what is designated the Banas culture is not homogenous across sites : cattle figurines are differently made at Ahar and Kayatha; at Ahar flaked stone tools are scarce whereas in coeval levels at Kayatha and Gilund many blade tools occur; and house walls resting on stone foundations appear to be unique to Ahar. Moreover, except in ceramics and metal objects, level I (Kayatha culture) at Kayatha is not very different in material culture from level II (Banas culture) as Sankalia has shown. Similarly at Inamgaon there appear to be few changes, except in pottery, between Malwa and Early Jorwe levels.

The reader will have realized that we have come up against one of the basic problems in archaeology, to which we in South Asia have given little attention. Are differences or similarities in pottery adequate criteria for designating or distinguishing cultures, especially as we tend to understand 'culture' and 'ethnic group' as synonymous? If an ethnic group shares a cultural inheritance, we expect its material remains to reflect both the shared patterns as well as the distinctness of the group from other contemporary societies, in a whole range of activities from house building, subsistence procurement, worship and disposal of the dead, to domestic utilities like pottery. Is there then any validity to the statement that at Inamgaon 'the Jorwe culture' succeeded 'the Malwa culture?'

We know that all assemblages representative of a culture can never be identical, because people marry across social boundaries, exchange goods with other peoples, migrate, and so on. What degree of similarity in assemblages, then, must we expect in the defining of a culture or culture region? One

can only suggest that for all four of these 'cultures' we isolate the various artefact types and map their distribution, and see if we can apply David Clarke's suggestion that a tribal or linguistic unit is defined by the co-occurrence of more than 65 per cent of the total range of artefact-types. Clarke's generalisations [4] are not universally accepted today, and it has even been questioned whether the object of archaeological study can at the outset be an assumed abstraction such as 'society.' But South Asian archaeology has not even addressed the problem of archaeological cultures, and critical analyses could begin with typology, mapping and quantification exercises. Then it would be fruitful to develop further on Dhavalikar's (1981-83) preliminary findings on changes in settlement patterns : while most sites remain small throughout, the mean size may be highest for the Malwa phase, which also sees the first possible fortification structures, whereas the total settled area could be the highest for the Jorwe phase. Sizes of the largest settlements, however, do not increase appreciably through the periods except in the case of Daimabad in the fertile Pravara valley. Another complication which we cannot dismiss is that while the sequence from the Kayatha to the Jorwe may represent a gradual thrust down the marchland, we also know that at some sites on the Tapi and the Pravara, the Malwa was not the earliest farming culture but was preceded by horizons with different ceramics and showing some affinity with sites in Gujarat.

If the largest site of the chalcolithic appears on the Pravara, and the largest number of sites occurs in the Tapi valley, we wonder whether the inferred chiefdom at Inamgaon in the sparsely settled Ghod-Bhima valley was politically autonomous, or whether it was a subcentre of a larger arena of religious and political dominance centered on Daimabad. The argument for chiefdom-level organization in the Jorwe phase is made by Dhavalikar (1985). It is based on a settlement-size hierarchy, irrigation works, craft production, storage facilities and high status burials, mostly at Inamgaon. Dhavalikar does not give details of the settlement hierarchy,

---

4. D. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (New York : Columbia University Press, Second edition, 1978)

for example, which smaller settlements he identifies as being tributary to Inamgaon. If site sizes range only between less than one and five hectares it may only mean that some villages were larger than others because they could produce more food in their vicinity. It needs to be demonstrated that the hierarchy does indeed reflect a chain of political control. One may also have bones to pick with the theoretical moorings of this hypothesis. Craft production does not necessarily mean craft specialization, namely, that someone only produced shell bangles to make her living. Some assessment has to be made of the quantum of output before specialization can be inferred. And chiefdoms are not 'class-structured societies' with private property and payment of taxes to a chief. Chiefdoms are societies with hereditary status. Chiefs may collect tribute, which is token, irregular and voluntary, but their religious and political authority functions through control over people rather than privileges over basic resources, which latter are very much the inheritance of descent groups rather than individuals. But what is important is that this kind of interpretation of the level of social organization of a chalcolithic society has been worked out for the first time, and it is offered as a hypothesis which can be verified or refuted by reference to ethnography and further analysis of the excavated material.

Equally stimulating has been Dhavalikar and Possehl's analysis of subsistence strategies at Inamgaon in the Malwa period (1974). Estimating the population of the village and assessing the full dietary range, they calculate the caloric requirements of the village and the calories derived per kilogram of grain. Using British period figures for the Bombay Presidency they then estimate yield per acre of the various crops grown in the Malwa period. It is thus calculated that the population of 1000 would require the produce of 667 acres (267 hectares) of land. Allowing for seed, spoilage and fallows, the figures would range from 260 to 800 hectares. The Ghod has not deposited alluvium for a distance of more than 68 metres on either bank near Inamgaon, so if prehistoric farmers had tilled only the alluvium, a strip of nine kilometres in length along either bank would have had to be cultivated. This would have been

too great a distance for farming efficiency, and the authors argue that the black cotton soil flanking the alluvium must have been cultivated. This refutes Kosambi's suggestion that only iron tools made the black soil cultivable.

Similarly the animal requirements and corresponding grazing range are also calculated for Inamgaon, and it is partly on this basis that we can argue for transhumance in the chalcolithic economy. Dhavalikar and Possehl caution that their estimates are tentative. Future work may modify their estimate of population per built-up area, or of the cattle population. Indeed, their hypothesis needs reworking as it is no longer considered that *jowār* was the staple of Inamgaon. Productivity per hectare will have to be recalculated. If this exercise is mechanically repeated for other regions and cultures, little will be gained, but it should inspire several independent forays into the question of prehistoric land use.

The corpus of excavation reports for South Asia is replete with scrappy information based on the excavation of often a miserable portion of a site. One can only assume that when an entire report appears for an excavation of 3.6 x 2.4 metres, the excavator has no question to put to his site other than the sequence of cultures (and for 'culture' read 'pottery' in many cases). The reader is, therefore, invited to read two excellent excavation reports, both on chalcolithic sites and produced by the Deccan College, to find out for herself how strategies of enquiry, and archaeological problems themselves—and here I am not referring to scientific aids or gadgets—have developed in the course of seventeen years. These are the reports for Navdatoli, a Malwa site on the Narmada (Sankalia, S. B. Deo and Z. D. Ansari 1971), and the recently published report on Inamgaon (Dhavalikar, Sankalia and Ansari 1988). I venture to suggest that Inamgaon is the most systematically studied Indian proto-historic site to date.

Just as the emergence of settled village life took different forms in different parts of the country, so also the introduction of iron occurred at different times in different contexts. D. K. Chakrabarti (1976) surveys the evidence from six 'regions' of South Asia on the antiquity of the use of iron, and finds that there is no cause to impute its origins to the

immigration of the Aryans. His survey of the location of iron ores (suitable for smelting with simple techniques) highlights their abundance and wide occurrence. On the basis of available radio carbon dates he suggests that iron working may have begun in Malwa around 1100 B.C. This is based on the argument that there is continuity between chalcolithic and iron age material cultures at sites in Malwa, and the dates for the terminal phases of the chalcolithic here are around 1300 B.C. V. Tripathi (1982) however does not accept cultural continuity from the chalcolithic into the iron age; pointing to contrasts in ceramics and the use of stone tools, she argues for a later date for the antiquity of iron in Malwa. She also argues (1984-85) against the assumption that because copper production can involve the use of iron ore as flux, or can lead to the accidental production of metallic iron, iron technology originated in copper production. It may be pointless to search for the first site or region producing iron, as there are too few radio carbon dates and as there may not, in any case, have been one centre of origin. But it is fairly clear that within a stretch of a few centuries, many communities began to use iron.

It is also clear that with the coming of iron we have an unprecedented number of sites in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, so that population densities were much higher than for example in the Mature Harappan period. Also, the monarchical kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala and the northern 'republics' emerged in the context of the later iron age in the Ganga plain. Since Kosambi in 1963 made the provocative assertion that extensive forest clearance and agrarian settlement would not have been possible in the Ganga plains without the use of iron, archaeologists have been exploring the connection between the introduction of iron technology, settlement patterns, and political development in northern India.

We may start with the caution that several settlements are known in these plains of people who did not use iron. Whereas Tripathi (1976) outlines the character of the first, Painted Grey Ware (PGW) using iron age culture of the plains, Lal (1968 and 1972), Gaur and Dikshit (1979) discuss aspects of the pre-iron cultures, and these works may be read

in conjunction with T. N. Roy's more up-to-date survey (1983) of the pre-iron horizon in both the upper and the middle Ganga valley.

Addressing himself to the problem of the significance of iron technology, Niharranjan Ray (1975-76) doubts whether either the utilization or standard of iron technology before the fourth century B.C. was of a level which would bring about significant changes in society and economy. He doubts whether full-fledged urbanism in north India can be dated to pre-Mauryan times. When iron began to be used, in the PGW horizon, there were few iron implements for tillage or tree felling; and even in the subsequent Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware horizon, there are few known ploughshares or socketed axes. So Ray objects to connections of the 'iron-productivity-surplus-state' nature. More important, he points out that for the PGW and NBP horizons, it is the importance of iron weaponry which is discernible. Those *janapadas* able to command greater iron resources or a more efficient weaponry would have had an advantage over others.

Chakrabarti (1985) also asks whether the present evidence points to any specific contrasts in cultural patterns between chalcolithic and iron-using horizons. He reminds us that a well-defined iron age is not discernible in all regions of South Asia. If iron was in use on the Ganga plains centuries before the proliferation of settlement and urbanism, iron technology could not have been a causal factor in urbanism. And he sees no major changes in crop choice between the chalcolithic and NBP phases in northern India. N. R. Banerjee in a comment following on Chakrabarti's paper points out that it is not the list of crops which is significant, but the method of cultivation. And Ray had remarked, in the work cited earlier, that tillage with the use of the hoe or wooden plough would limit the area under cultivation.

One wonders, however, if the problem of agricultural technology and productivity has been so simplified by archaeologists as to be misconceived. The use of iron for ploughs may not be the single most important variable. In the first place, we are not certain as to which kinds of sites we may expect to yield a true sample of agricultural tools. Second, right up to the colonial period, wooden and bamboo

ploughs, with or without iron sheathing, were used in some
regions, iron ploughs in others. True, iron ploughshares were
used on the plains of Bihar and Bengal. But we know that
British ideas concerning the necessary superiority of iron over
wooden ploughs were often wrong. The great variety of
traditional ploughs indicates that ploughs developed accord-
ing to the particular requirements of particular localities.
There may be no simple correlation between material and the
depth of ploughing. In nineteenth century Maharashtra, for
example, acacia wood ploughs required the traction strength
of one to five pairs of bullocks. In many regions it was of
no advantage to the farmer to overturn clods from depth
(these would lose moisture and bake hard in the sun) or to
complete ploughing in a single operation, instead of spread-
ing it over several months. It is not only the material of the
plough which is important, but also the angle of the share,
its adjustability, the alignment of handle and body, and
whether the sole drags flat in the furrow or whether the
pointed end of the share alone scratches and stirs the soil to
a shallow depth. The flat and heavy sole, dragged flat, may
have had a true advantage only in areas where the top
profile of the soil was saturated by rains, leaving the lower
portions dry, or where farmers had to prepare particularly
large field areas.[5] And if the British dismissed the traditional
plough as merely a 'scratch-plough', it may be pointed out
that the solitary NBP-level share at Atranjikhera is smaller
and lighter than that made by the Agaria in recent times.
Many more bone arrowheads were found at Atranjikhera in
PGW levels than iron arrowheads, which also indicates that
it would be naive to assume that iron immediately replaced
all other materials for weaponry. It is a shame that Kosambi's
suggestion, instead of provoking detailed studies into technol-
ogy, became a mere formula.

Makkhan Lal (1986) also argues against an overemphasis

---

5. Voelcker, J. A. *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* 217-223.
(London : Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1983; reprinted, Delhi : Agricóle Reprints,
1986), A full bibliography is given in Sangawan, S. 'Trial of Strength : The
Native Wooden Plough vis-a-vis the English Iron Plough in Colonial India', a
paper presented at the NISTADS workshop on Traditional Technologies in
Indian Agriculture, March 1989.

on the significance of iron. Using quantified data from his explored 'region' (Kanpur district), he shows that the mean size of NBP-ware using settlements was small, and that only a few large sites were located on the Ganga. He works out that the average distance between neighbouring settlements was nine kilometres and, taking the lead from Dhavalikar and Possehl, he computes population sizes and thus land requirements. He thus comes to infer that large-scale cutting of vegetation would not have been required for subsistence agriculture in this period in the upper Ganga plains.

There is another implication of early iron utilization. Village communities could have become dependent, for the first time, on a basic resource available only at a distance : for example, sites on the upper Ganga plains may have had to get their ores from the Agra-Gwalior region. Prospecting for ores could have increased knowledge about distant places and opened up regular routes. We see from Roy's synthesis (1983) that it is in the later part of the iron age that North Indian sites exhibit a substantial increase in the use of precious or semi-precious materials. This and the distribution of NBP ware (albeit often as stray sherds) well outside the Ganga plains testify to the opening up of communications across the subcontinent to a degree unprecedented in previous centuries.

As we have been discussing the impact of iron technology, it may be appropriate to introduce here other studies on ancient technology. The reader may begin with the bibliographical essay of Ray and Chakrabarti (1975), which covers the work to that date on stone, bronze, iron, gold, and glass technologies and on technical aspects of building, transport, textiles and agriculture. More up-to-date are studies on metal work by Bhardwaj (1981-83) and G. Kuppuram and on stone axes by V. Shinde. Agrawal (1969) analyses the distribution of the pre-iron age Copper Hoards in the northern plains and adjacent plateau, and their metal composition, and has provocative suggestions on the use of some of the artefacts.

Even if the reader is not interested in technology *per se* (s)he will find of interest two elegant pieces by Hegde (1973 and 1985). The first is a reconstruction of smelting, forging and carburization techniques used at one of the early iron

producing sites of Gujarat, and the second is on copper smelting and the processes of copper mining in the Aravallis. Both articles lucidly explain how we can reconstruct metallurgical technologies, and give insights into the ingenious methods used by early man to obtain metal.

Glass technology, which appears in the early iron age, may have been an offshoot of either faience or glaze production, or of iron smelting and forging. Certainly iron tools such as tongs and rods were necessary for glass production. Unlike with metal, chemical analyses of glass give fairly clear indicators of raw material and provenance and it is now becoming possible to distinguish the products of different technological traditions at first millennium sites (Bhardwaj 1987). If certain of these traditions are widely spread over much of the country, the archaeologist cannot afford to overlook the implications.

Incidentally, one aspect of pyrotechnologies in proto-historic India still awaits attention : the fuel inputs. For some parts of the world it is being suggested that ancient smelting, copper more than iron, was highly wasteful of wood : according to one conservative estimate, 20 to 40 kilograms of charcoal—140 to 280 kilograms of green wood—would have been necessary for the production of 1 kilogram copper or 2 to 4 kilograms of iron. Meanwhile it has been suggested that less than two centuries of copper production in pre-historic Oman could have depleted the local vegetation cover. Studies on traditional iron smelting procedures in India have shown that different timbers were preferred in different regions for fuel; that the absence of the use of a flux and the simple structure of clay kilns meant that the need for charcoal was high. According to one estimate,[6] an Agaria furnace in the Jabalpur area, working seven months in the year, with an annual output of 220 maunds, required roughly four times the weight of charcoal fuel, and this in turn means that 12 hectares of forest was necessary for the annual functioning of a single furnace. Considering that charcoal transports badly,

---

6. Elwin, V. *The Agaria* (London : Oxford University Press, 1942), 234-236. See also Bhattacharya, S. 'Iron Smelters and the Indigenous Iron and Steel Industry of India' in S. Sinha ed., *Aspects of Indian Culture and Society* (N. K. Bose Festschrift) (Calcutta : Indian Anthropological Society, 1972) 133-151.

that iron production tends therefore to be located near plentiful supplies of wood, and that pre-industrial iron production is so heavily wood consuming, one must ask on what scale early iron could have been produced and used, whether production could ever have been concentrated at a few major 'industrial' sites, and what the environmental impact could have been of long-term iron smelting at a single site like Atranjikhera.

In 1975 Hegde reported the results of his chemical and electron microscope analyses of the PGW and NBP pottery. Some laboratories have not been able to confirm Hegde's findings on the material used for paint or slip, but his work shows that it was not only in shapes that PGW and NBP were alike: the technologies of their production were very similar. It was only the distinct methods of surface treatment which resulted respectively in Painted Grey, Black Slipped, and Northern Black Polished Wares. The cultural significance of this should not be underestimated, especially in the light of Roy's reconstruction of culture regions and development stages in the Ganga valley (1983).

Roy shows that we can discount the notion that these three ceramic types grew one out of the other in linear progression. This belief was based on the stratigraphy of Hastinapur, one of the earliest Ganga sites to be systematically excavated, where NBP pottery was stratified above levels with PGW. Roy shows that there is an Early NBP horizon and a Late one (the latter occurs at Hastinapur), and the material culture associated with each is distinct. It is also demonstrated that the upper Ganga valley up to about Allahabad is a distinct region (in the true sense of the term) from the valley farther downstream, and significantly, the distributions of PGW and Early NBP follow this distinction. Yet many artefactual forms are common to both regions. It was only in a subsequent phase, around the fifth century B.C., that NBP, in a coarser fabric and with less fine surface treatment, was used in all parts of the plains, and it is this period alone that can be designated 'urban.'

It has long been believed that the PGW horizon represents the material culture of the Later Vedic texts, and that NBP represents colonization by Sanskrit speakers of the middle

Ganga valley, with a greater reliance on agriculture, including the cultivation of rice. Now, however, we see from Roy's findings that agriculture is as old in the middle plains as it is in the upper, and given the regionalization and chronological parity of the two deluxe wares, to speak of a colonizing thrust from the Doab into the middle plains may not be viable.

In this connection it may also be appropriate to mention Srivastava's analysis of the Black-and-Red potteries (1979) occurring in different protohistoric contexts in different regions. The pottery varies in form and fabric through the regions, its forms often imitating those of other ceramics with which it occurs at a site. Other than the technique of deliberate firing under both reducing and oxidizing conditions, there is little in common between the Black-and-Red Ware found, say, in Gujarat and that occurring in the northern sites. So the occurrence of Black-and-Red Ware in different zones carries no implications about the movements of peoples.

An intensive study of a particular region of the Ganga plains (Makkhan Lal 1984) analyses the changes in settlement patterns in the Kanpur district (an arbitrary unit of study rather than a 'region' in the true sense) from the chalcolithic to the early historic periods. There is a steady increase in the number of sites through the periods; there is a marked continuity of settlement from PGW to [Late] NBP horizons, but the total number of sites increases twofold; and the sizes of the largest sites increase correspondingly. A nearest neighbour analysis shows that there is greater clustering of the larger settlements through time. There are many lines of enquiry on the process of urbanization that one can pursue from Makkhan Lal's findings, including his estimate that in the NBP phase four of the largest settlements could have housed 10 per cent of the total population of the Doab.

A refreshingly different work from those just cited is on the plant remains from Atranjikhera in the Doab, where a sequence with Ochre Coloured Pottery, chalcolithic Black-and-Red, Black-Slipped Ware, PGW, and NBP Ware has been revealed (Chowdhury et al. 1977). Archaeologists tend to accept the findings of scientists uncritically, as gospel. Here,

however, the botanists document stage by stage their methods and criteria for identifying plant remains, showing that not all their identifications are conclusive. In PGW levels the range of crops includes wheat, and the question arises whether irrigation was a factor in the comparatively late introduction of this crop at this site. Most intriguing are the finds, from different levels, of timbers like *chir* pine wood, Himalyan cypress and deodar woods, which today grow at appreciable distances from the site, the latter two on fairly high slopes of the Himalaya. All are resinous and give a good fragrance when burning. Even more enigmatic is the occurrence in as early as the chalcolithic levels of teak wood which according to modern botanical maps could have come only from central India or the peninsula. Either we have to consider the possibility that the pristine forest cover of the plains was not only thicker than today but consisted of a radically different ecosystem, or we have to explore what kinds of protohistoric movements or exchanges could have made the transportation of timber, of all things, possible over long distances.

· Finally, in the context of the nature of iron age urbanism, M. S. Mate (1969-70) provides a comparative study of nine sites, which asks whether military fortifications were a part of the early urban settlement pattern. On the basis of texts and depictions in sculpture, Mate derives certain principles essential to military fortification. He examines in detail the location, topography and morphology of the nine mounds and excavated architecture, and finds that at some sites ramparts and adjacent moats functioned to divert flood water from nearby rivers, and that the earliest military or defence structures in the northern plains may date as late as the fifth century B. C.

Once in the iron age, we are in a period when several texts took their first shape. The problem arises of how to read the archaeological material in the light of information contained in contemporary texts. These 'texts' were transmitted in oral form for centuries, until they were written down. Both textual and archaeological material can be dated on independent grounds, and cross checks can be made between texts and excavated finds on geographic milieu, or the use of

metals, tools, plants, animals or food crops. This kind of exercise has been done by R. S. Sharma (1975-76) on the correspondence between the PGW material remains and the Later Vedic texts. Excavated finds can put flesh on the bones of written sources by revealing aspects of material culture ignored by the texts. Archaeology may deal with the remains of marginal groups or modes of living, whereas texts may focus on the concerns of dominant groups. Or it may well be the other way around.

Taken beyond this, however, an exercise in correlation can run into trouble. Neither texts nor archaeological material present 'facts' which speak for themselves. To handle them as sources requires a different kind of expertise in each case. If archaeological techniques have advanced, so also has an understanding of oral literature, its components, functions and forms, and the methods by which it is transmitted, as well as the repercussions of literacy and the 'freezing' of verbal art in the form of written texts.

Much attention has been focused in our country on whether the epics can be verified by archaeology. But we need to understand the nature of oral epics before we infer that the application of sophisticated archaeological data-recovery techniques can answer the question. Epics look back on a heroic past age of a people when society or existing values went through a crisis or major upheaval, and highlight the values of heroism or honour or obedience to duty. Epics are never complete fabrications, nor are they history. Around a kernel of historical happenings material builds up when later events, new values, folk tales or didactic material attach themselves to the core, thereby also inflating the scale of the core event.

In her work on the *Mahabharata*, G. Lad (1983) uses the Critical Edition and examines the growth of the epic over centuries of major historical change. She shows that the text as we have it from late manuscripts cannot reflect the tradition of one region or of any one society as a whole. The narrative material is very much restricted to the interests and concerns of *kshatriyas*. Lad reads the Critical Edition in the light of archaeological finds of various periods so that further understanding may be gleaned on the different stages of the

growth of the epic. While no archaeological culture or site can represent an 'epic age' or 'epic culture', various aspects of material culture—food items, textiles, gems, weaponry and so on—which are traceable down the archaeological record, help us to distinguish three or four stages in the growth of the epic.

It may then be asked, what about the kernel of the story—the earliest layers—can this be archaeologically detected? There can only be correlation at a general level, in terms of technological and social context. It would be pointless to look for the actual events. Archaeological data only tell us how humdrum everyday artefacts, which were usually discarded by their users, gradually change over large units of space and time (the archaeologist is lucky if he can deal with chronological units as small as two or three hundred years), and do not reveal events. We may point out here that there is nothing from the excavated remains of Troy level VII-a to verify the core of Homer's Iliad : a Greek coalition under the leadership of the king of Mycenae laying a ten-year siege on Troy. In fact many scholars doubt if a ten-year siege was at all possible in the Dark Ages.

Therefore one recommends the approach of Lad and of Sankalia (1973b) over that of Lal (1981). If we can trace the beginnings of an epic tradition to the period 800-500 B. C., we will certainly find in the stratified record stray elements like dice or horse remains which also find mention in the earliest portions of the texts. But one does not see how verification of coeval archaeological remains at some places mentioned in an epic can establish 'a kernel of truth at the base' of the epics. For a more indepth critique the reader is referred to B. D. Chattopadhyaya (1975-76), who rightly questions the validity of the latter kind of exercise.

The greatest challenge to archaeological interpretation comes from the peninsula of the first millennium B. C., where megalithic memorials were raised to the dead from Vidarbha to the Tamraparni valley and from the region around Belgaum to the Andhra coastal plains. There is a far greater number of megaliths than of coeval habitation sites, and funerary architecture saw a far greater permanence and expenditure of

resources than did domestic architecture. Burials and habita-
tions over the peninsula contain in general the same kinds of
Black-and-Red pottery and iron tools and weapons. This
horizon succeeds a period when copper or bronze were used
in only a small way at various chalcolithic sites.

The complexity and variety of megalith construction have
attracted the greatest attention, and thus the tendency to refer
to 'the megalithic culture', although a culture can never be
defined by mortuary practices alone. In any case funerary
structures show much variation and phemomena like urn
burials are not literally megaliths. It would be foolhardy
indeed to impute one culture tradition to both seventh
century Vidarbha and third century Tamil Nadu.

At the same time if our largest data base is provided by
the mortuary remains, then interpretation must perforce
proceed from them, beginning with the typology of the
megaliths. A meticulous typology for Karnataka (where
megaliths occur most profusely) has been worked out by
A. Sundara (1975), who makes a detailed study of the
distribution of various types. This is the first step in sorting
out the multifarious strands which go into the making of the
megalithic horizon, and in the building of an internal
chronology, for Sundara shows that megalith types, not
always correlating with local availability of stone, can be read
as markers of distinct traditions.

Sundara believes that the earliest phase of megalith
building is represented by passage-chamber tombs (with
subtypes) in northwestern Karnataka between the Krishna and
Malaprabha rivers. This is based on the hypothesis that the
use of iron and the construction of megaliths were introduced
to the peninsula in a situation of culture contact with regions
further north, perhaps via the west coast of India : at all sites
where iron age strata occur above neolithic-chalcolithic re-
mains, the iron-associated material is intrusive; the megalith
types of Karnataka show parallels with types in regions
further west and north; occasional horse bones occur in
peninsular megaliths; and hitherto radio carbon dates assign
a chronological priority to the chalcolithic-iron overlap levels
at sites in northern Karnataka.

Sundara suggests that other megalith types further south

are subsequent developments from the passage chamber tombs, but he sees a separate line of development, originating in the neolithic-chalcolithic tradition, for cairns, pits, and pit-circles of the Shorapur-Raichur Doabs where earlier sites are also profuse.

The value of Sundara's work lies not only in his differentiation and distribution study of the various kinds of megaliths, but also in his careful correlations of types with other aspects of material culture such as Red Ware and White Painted Black-and-Red Ware (BRW). Thus he distinguishes the BRW from megalith building as cultural phenomena, just as he views the development of iron technology independently from that of megalith construction. [Except for a limited beginning made by L. S. Leshnik (1974), detailed typologies of iron artefacts from excavated burials in different regions have not, however, been attempted.]

B. Narasimhaiah (1980) has extended the range of typological analysis of megalithic structures into Tamil Nadu and finds here that the dolmenoid cist with eastern porthole and the transepted cist with passage derive from earlier megalith types in eastern and northern Karnataka, whereas other forms such as urn burials may be late developments in Tamil Nadu itself. Narasimhaiah reinforces Sundara's suggestion that BRW making and megalith construction were two separate phenomena. To this we may add Deo's (1973) observation that in Vidarbha a micaceous Red Ware in distinct shapes and poorly fired fabric constitutes a larger proportion of the pottery than BRW.

Narasimhaiah infers that the megalith builders represent only one section of the first millennium population of Tamil Nadu, for there are habitation sites without associated cemeteries and vice versa; the megalith builders may represent a mobile population, who gradually sedentarized. A similar inference was drawn earlier by Leshnik (1974), who however shows less appreciation of variability in ceramic and other associated finds. Leshnik views the megaliths as graves of nomadic pastoralists : there are local folk traditions pointing to this; early Tamil poetry refers to certain modes of disposal of the dead which may coincide with archaeological evidence; the poetry also refers to pastoralists in certain areas

of Tamil Nadu; the names of warlike pastoral tribes probably survived into later centuries as caste names; also, there are more iron weapons than tools in the graves. Leshnik makes broad estimates of the numbers of individuals buried in cemeteries and concludes that only a fraction of the entire population was interred in them. This section of the population made neither the iron artefacts nor the pots which are found in the graves, but would have acquired them from other people in exchange.

The mobile pastoralist hypothesis would have gained more credence if it were attempted to cull just what was the nature of mobility or the composition of animal herds. We cannot simply assume that pastoralism involved whole tribes or groups who wandered over their own territories, as in the case of western Asiatic sheep and goat pastoralism which has been studied at so many levels. In a collection of papers on South Asian nomadism (Leshnik and Sontheimer 1975), Zvelebil quotes references in the Tamil texts to millet cultivation by the pastoral *ayar* and *itaiyar* and to pastoralists returning at dusk to their villages with their herds. Thus there may not have been specialized pastoralism, or there may have been transhumance (movement out from a village base, with flocks, only in the dry season) rather than full-fledged nomadism in ancient times. If one is wary of inferring true nomadism in the first millennium, one may understand better the limited geographic spread of some megalith types such as the passage chamber tombs (between the Krishna and Malaprabha rivers) or the dolmenoid cist with multiple orthostats (restricted to the northernmost portion of the Tamil Nadu coastal plain), although to be fair one must acknowledge that the transepted cist with passage has a wide distribution from the Mysore region to the Tamil plains. Enquiries into the forms of mobility would also give clues to the possible kinds of exchanges. We believe on the one hand in a social division between people of the sparse villages and the occupants of the cemeteries, while on the other hand we explain the common ceramic and iron artefact forms by assuming that these were acquired by mobile people from villagers—and thereafter put out of circulation by being interred in graves. Something is missing in this interpretation.

Perhaps we are correct in assuming distinct groups, mobile herders versus sedentary farmers, but are reading the archaeological evidence too literally. Let us refer to Deo's studies (1982 and 1985, plus various excavation reports not cited here) on cemeteries and villages in Vidarbha, a region which in recent times has seen the movements of transhumant herders through forests and cultivated tracts. No clear-cut social division is visible in the archaeological record. While habitation sites are far fewer in number than stone circle cemeteries, the two can occur in close proximity. The largest known settlement, Khairwada on the Dham, has the largest number of stone circles in its immediate vicinity. There is evidence for a greater range of crops in Vidarbha than in Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, which may be a result of differing excavation techniques. While in Vidarbha too, weapons are the most frequent kind of iron artefact, we do not find any neat pattern whereby axes, sickles or nails occur exclusively in settlements and swords or daggers in cemeteries. Horse bones occur in both kinds of sites; while cattle, sheep and goat bones are limited to the habitation sites. In the Vidarbha burials have been found a range of iron chisels, and specialized wood cutting and slicing tools. There is nothing, therefore, to refute Deo's suggestion that people who lived at Takalghat buried their dead in the stone circles of Khapa. Neither can the settlements in Vidarbha with their iron industry, wood crafts, bronze work and silver and gold ornaments represent periodic camps of mobile people.

The Vidarbha sites have no continued occupation into the early historic period, in contrast to settlements in Tamil Nadu, for which region the Sangam anthologies provide limited information on social and economic conditions during the transition into the early historic period. R. Champakalakshmi (1975) shows what correlations can be made between texts and excavated material, for example in the identification of sites or in gauging economic activities in particular settlements. She refers to a tradition ascribing the origins of certain clans of the plains to the Dwarka region and asks if a migration route could have moved down the west coast and thence southeast. The general correspondence of this hypothetical movement to the movements and relative chronology

of megalith types traced by Sundara and Narasimhaiah is striking.

We are nowhere near an understanding of the societies which built the megaliths. While, as suggested, typologies are important, we cannot lose the wood for the trees. The megalithic is the only protohistoric horizon in South Asia which saw the construction in permanent materials of memorials to the dead and the regular interment of substantial quantities of metal into graves. The why and how will have to be asked. Does megalith building reveal the importance of ancestor cults and the increasing corporateness of descent groups (Heine-Geldern 1969)? Megaliths may be studied not only as evidence for migration routes, but as territorial markers appearing in situations where external threat, or intensified culture contact, or extension of agriculture, lead to competition over land or crucial resource areas, so that descent groups acquire a new importance as owners and controllers of resources.

Meanwhile we have the problem of the burial of iron artefacts. Their deliberate interment can mean that the artefacts had wider meanings or 'functions' than simply as aids to cutting or combat. The act of deposition may have been important in itself. But we should not fall into the trap of ascribing this phenomenon to 'religion' and thereby closing the subject. There is no simple formula which explains the occurrence of objects in graves : in some societies grave goods reveal the perception of the afterlife, in others they have to do with the social persona of the dead, in yet other contexts they have to do with ritual contamination associated with death. To ascribe an economic function to the interment of iron objects is also difficult. It is often said that primitive societies destroy or bury wealth items as a means of restricting their circulation and preventing their devaluation. But were these iron objects in the graves prestige items? Iron was smelted and worked at a number of centres and iron objects are almost ubiquitous in the graves : so far no situation has been reported where say .ten per cent of the graves of a cemetery contain about sixty per cent of the iron objects; and the iron artefact types known in the burials also occur in discard contexts in habitation sites.

Thus far I have referred only to the 'mainstream' proto-historic cultures and the centrifugal regions of the subcontinent. It is equally challenging to study phenomena in the border or frontier regions. In the Garo and North Cachar hills neolithic material shows striking similarities with material from China or Southeast Asia, whereas in the Naga hills and Assam there may have been a blending of subcontinental traditions or movements with those from lands farther east. In the Kashmir valley neolithic sites exhibit Chinese elements. In the angle of the Kacchi at the foot of the Bolan Pass we have a long culture sequence represented by Mehrgarh, Sibri and Pirak, showing unmistakable Central Asian elements. And in the northernmost corner of South Asia (Swat and adjoining regions) we have a sequence from 3000 B.C. into the Mauryan period, with linkages in earlier phases with neolithic Kashmir and China, whereas in later periods there are striking parallels with ceramics of Iran.

A start in viewing the material as representative of "frontier history" has been made by S. Tusa (1979) who sees the history of Swat and Dir as oscillating between 'marginality' and 'encapsulation', and tries to assess the historic significance of the exotic material in assemblages over different periods. Frontier history may be a rewarding field of research. Frontier regions vary in topography and natural resources. In Swat narrow valleys enclosed by high mountain ranges may be productive in agriculture, but face difficulties in overland communications.

In contrast the route from Kandahar to the Kacchi over the Bolan Pass was a major highway seeing movements of men and flocks from a very early period, but the Kacchi plain itself is not particularly productive. So to make frontier studies we need to evaluate hinterland developments as well as the economic potential of the frontier region itself and observe also how frontiers shift over time. We may regard frontier zones as 'filters' and plot how *jowār* or grapes or the horse or even the violin-shaped figurines of the Central Asian type at Sibri and Pirak occur sporadically at other hinterland sites. But frontier societies may not always be marginal : they may take advantage of wide networks of interaction spheres to develop levels of complexity in their own right, as it

demonstrated by the evidence from Mehrgarh. Tusa's work, hopefully, is only a beginning in developing a strategy for exploring the concept of frontiers.

A strong emphasis has recently developed in archaeological studies, especially in the Deccan College tradition, on ethnoarchaeology. In a sense this is not a new development. In the very beginnings of archaeological interpretation, humble objects like axes were so identified only with the help of ethnographic observation. Ethnography is to archaeology what zoology is to palaeontology : if material remains do not represent culture in its sum total, then evidence from sources other than material remains, namely, observations of living cultural practices from similar contexts, must be used in the reconstruction of a past culture system. Thus reasoning by analogy is inevitable in archaeology.

Dhavalikar (1984) argues that it is the archaeologist who must seek data on the material culture of "tribals or village folk" in order to interpret his excavated finds. He assumes that "tribals are the descendants of earlier primitive social groups" and that "there is direct historic continuity" from the past in the case of tribal cultures. Village peoples on the other hand preserve ancient practices "in unadulterated form", also reflecting past culture elements. M. Nagar (1975) emphasizes that the archaeologist can get much information from cultures outside the mainstream of modernization and industrialization, whereas Murty (1985b) studies primitive groups in less disturbed ecosystems as autochthons in their native habitat. Thus in the study of the material culture of Inamgaon it was knowledge of present-day practices of the locality which made possible the reconstruction of house forms, the interpretation of the circular mud platforms which were found in houses, and an understanding of the function of small clay figurines of men (Dhavalikar 1984).

In the Bhimbetka region of Madhya Pradesh archaeology has brought to light that hunters and gatherers continued to occupy rock shelters well into the historical period, perhaps continuing to hunt and gather forest resources even after they took to agriculture. Nagar (1983) studied the subsistence

activities of four villages near Bhimbetka, an area still rich in flora and fauna, especially wild plant foods. These today are substantially consumed by local tribesmen, and Nagar sees the roots of such subsistence strategies in protohistoric times when many people were hunters and gatherers. Similarly, the location of tribal shrines on the forested hill slopes may be a remnant of rituals practised by hunters before they descended to the valley and took to agriculture.

Murty (1985a) has collated a rich body of information on storage and preservation of food of all kinds in Andhra Pradesh, which throws light on an important aspect of subsistence strategies, impossible to cull from the archaeological record. Murty's work (1985b) on the Kurnool cave area, where stratified cave deposits (upper palaeolithic to mesolithic) are rich in faunal remains, uses ethnographic material to explore the possible modes of hunting and trapping of this great variety of fauna and also to interpret the nature of the bone debris.

At a different level of analysis and interpretation, V. Roux (1985) made a study of the distribution of metal agricultural tools in the Rajasthani village of Malkhaira. Here land is private property and there are great inequalities in the size of the holdings, but the archaeologist would not be able to infer such inequalities from the distribution of iron tools through the houses. Tools can be left in fields or barns, are periodically recycled, or can be loaned to sharecroppers. Thus the number of metal tools observed in houses may represent 75 per cent of the total number of tools actually owned, or as little as 30 per cent. Any archaeological quantification of tools across houses, then, would give an erroneous picture.

K. Paddayya (1982), in his exploration and excavation of lower palaeolithic sites around Hunsgi in the Shorapur Doab has used anthropological data not in the sense of comparing individual traits (see Paddayya 1985), but to derive the principles of the social organization of hunters and gatherers. This ordered both his field methods and his interpretation of sites. As hunters move seasonally and their bands repeatedly fuse or fission, it was seen as futile to study one site in isolation and necessary to survey the valley on a close grid. Paddayya could not, on the basis of tool types, distinguish

butchering, kill, camp or tool-making sites, but by demarcating site sizes and clusters, and by studying seasonal variations in the local edible flora and fauna, he had made a beginning in distinguishing the minimal bands of the monsoon months from maximal bands congregating in the dry season.

V. Jayaswal and K. Krishna (1986) offer a detailed study of the production of anthropomorphic and animal terracotta figurines in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh today, in terms of their use in ritual, as toys and as decorative pieces, and in terms of their production either on demand by potters or on a large scale in a few centres. It was found that as today, first millennium B. C. animal terracottas show the same techniques of clay preparation and baking as does contemporary pottery. As today, iron age anthropomorphic figurines of finer quality were mass produced from moulds. Jayaswal and Krishna do not use their data on 134 contemporary terracotta production centres to cull the principles by which we would be able to distinguish between, say, elephant figures made for the *Chhattha* or *devi-thāṇa* rituals on the one hand and those made for decorative purposes on the other. True, the differences between decorative pieces and ritual ones are obvious in modern pieces, but where excavated terracottas are concerned, the authors rely on simplification of form, 'stylization' or 'abstraction' as general pointers to their use in the cult.

Mehrgarh is the largest and most prosperous site of the northwestern part of the subcontinent for several centuries up to the beginning of the Mature Harappa period. It is, however, not located in a zone with special advantage for agricultural productivity. I therefore investigated (1987) whether the pastoral factor was crucial, and to do so used anthropological material on pastoral mobility in the region, the forms of pastoral social organization and the variety of exchanges between herdsmen and farmers. In the Mehrgarh region live diverse groups with different land use practices: sedentary farmers, herders from the hills who winter here, and nomadic pedlars. F. Audouze and C. Jarrige (1978) study the forms of settlement of these groups and ask if we could detect differences in their subsistence patterns from their archaeological remains. This is an exceptionally valuable

reference for archaeologists struggling with the 'invisible' pastoral sector.

Having resorted to it myself, I will now argue that all is not well with ethnoarchaeology. Let us take Dhavalikar's (1984) interpretation of one kind of dwelling at prehistoric Inamgaon : the circular hut with sunken floor. Today such houses are constructed by those who cannot afford to buy long enough logs to carry the roof at an adequate height. In order to make do with less timber (shorter logs), the floor is sunk below ground level. Dhavalikar infers, "Obviously for the same reasons the first farmers of Inamgaon built pit dwellings."

Only a few houses at Inamgaon had sunken floors, so we cannot assume that around 1400 B.C. the immediate environment of the site had been so degraded that there was a scarcity of timber. We saw earlier that Dhavalikar has suggested a chiefdom level of social organization for the Jorwe horizon. In this kind of social system there may be marked differences in wealth items between households, but basic resources such as housebuilding materials would be subject neither to marketing nor monetization. With descent groups functioning as resource owning and managing units, we would expect every household belonging to local descent groups to have had access to resources which ensured survival. The pit dwellings may have had some social or status significance (clients, war captives, refugees?) but not a fiscal or monetary one.

Nagar (1975) acknowledges, unlike Dhavalikar, that primitive societies cannot be assumed to have been static over the centuries. She admits that there are no groups of Indians today who rely exclusively on a stone technology, so that there can be no exact parallels with stone age societies. She refers (1983) to the desperate poverty of the Gonds and Pardhans in the Bhimbetka area, and their vulnerability to exploitation. Yet she suggests that their food habits are survivals of past hunter-gatherer subsistence patterns. Is it not possible that desperation can drive people to consume things they would not in good times consider edible? Does the subsistence of these people derive from their ethnic character or does it reveal the brutal face of modern Indian society?

One may also query the relevance of Roux's findings for protohistoric societies. Malkhaira today functions in a money economy with cotton as its main crop; iron tools are purchased or obtained in exchange for grain, and one assumes that the raw material itself functions as a commodity. But if iron and iron tools were not commodities in the past, what would the implications have been for the physical disposal of the tools?

Audouze and Jarrige observe that farmers and herdsmen in the Kacchi both use the same kinds of pottery and metal tools, but that a parallel archaeological situation should not lead us to infer direct exchanges between them, as today pastoralists acquire their household needs from the bazaars of towns and villages. But it is the very money economy of later history which made such sporadic and impersonal exchanges possible—an analogy cannot be drawn for prehistoric Mehrgarh or Pirak in this matter.

What I have been arguing is that those analogies which disregard social and economic context remain of doubtful validity. The present is relevant to the past and vice versa, and we do need to relate the two. But a question of method arises. To do a postage-stamp ethnography, chasing individual traits, has been given up within anthropology itself as unproductive when divorced from an understanding of linkages between traits in a social structure. Neither does the archaeologist have to sit humbly at the feet of the ethnographer. No ethnographer can study another culture in a totally objective way : his cultural background and values, his place in an academic tradition, and his own linguistic constructs will form a screen through which he will choose what realities to observe, and through which he will perceive those realities. The same would apply to the archaeologist scouting for comparative material.

Before ethnoarchaeology becomes the fashion in India, we may give consideration to one of its underlying assumptions. Are unchanging village or tribal traditions a reality? As archaeologists, investigators of the past, we just cannot afford to make uncritical assumptions about this. A particular belief or aspect of behaviour may be centuries old, but when it first appeared it was surely something new. The settled village is

itself a historic category that came into being in a particular combination of social and economic circumstances, so also social organization of the 'tribal' form. Villages have constantly been settled and deserted through history. Inamgaon, for example, was deserted around 700 B.C. and has not seen continuity of occupation till today. Political developments in medieval Rajasthan, again, forced some groups out of agrarian tracts into the existence of 'criminal tribes'.

Within the range of just 'ancient' village structures themselves, there can be marked differences in land ownership principles, in the aims of production (subsistence with or without rent to the city, or tax, or sale in a market), or in villagers' access to tools and technology. The most marked rupture in the ancient period would have come with the advent of coinage and marketing systems in the countryside, influencing crop choice, reducing the self-sufficiency of rural households, making possible varied and momentary transactions between strangers, and making farmers vulnerable to fluctuations in grain prices. Therefore I cannot believe that 'the Indian village' even in a backward region like Bihar today is the same kind of phenomenon as chalcolithic Chirand.

It is not possible to ignore the ideological implications of the concept of the unchanging Indian village. When Marx wrote on the stagnant and isolated Indian village, he was using travellers' accounts, British parliamentary papers and reports of the colonial administration. From the early nineteenth century, British sources on India had emphasized that village institutions were unchanged 'from time immemorial'. This idea did not emerge by itself, but in a 'package' in which 'the Indian village' was a community enjoying political autonomy, economic autarky, social homogeneity and an unchanging character. The British ignored phenomena like caste and domination and discounted the influence on the village of the growth of regional states through history, although state powers established law and order in the countryside and extracted revenue and military service from villages. The British were attempting to comprehend alien cultures through simplistic categories, in a context of colonial domination, paternalism, and interest in land revenue, for

which last the crucial social unit was the village. There was, as Breman[7] points out, also the legitimation factor : the need to project the reality of Indian society as lying in the villages, not in the courts of tyrannical rulers. It was implied that it did not matter to the villages who ruled from the capital, that colonial rule would inject some movement into stagnant rural economies.

That such generalizations were distortions, has long been recognized. Village society was neither homogeneous nor isolated nor self-sufficient. Through history, economic and social needs have linked village populations by multiple strands to other villages, towns, or regional centres. Villages participated in regional economic networks and were affected by the growth and decline of trade and manufacturing centres. *Jātis* have seen fission and fusion while at the same time tribal groups have steadily been absorbed into the caste system. Indeed, Bremen suggests that it was the colonial administration which made for the enclosure of villages. He regards it as "ironic that the village, once the cornerstone of colonial policy, is now proclaimed as a symbol of resistance by those who profess nationalist sentiments."

So in our eagerness to find 'survivals' of prehistoric cultures in the present day we may deny to Indian civilization its historical movement. Considering that the past has, since the time of the earliest Sumerian histories, been subject to political interest and manipulation, and considering that to the layman the archaeologist's version of the past is especially reliable as it rests on 'tangible' evidence and scientific dating, archaeologists should enquire critically into the intellectual validity of the whole range of attitudes, conscious and unconscious, to the past, that have been contributing to our deteriorating social environment with its increasingly parochial, materialistic and communal values.

Let us consider tradition as viewed by anthropologists, especially political anthropologists who are perhaps the most acutely aware of the importance of history and internal

7. Breman, J. *The Shattered Image : Construction and Deconstruction of the Village in Colonial Asia'*, Centre for Asian Studies, Amsterdam, 1987. See also Srinivas, M. N. 'The Indian Village : Myth and Reality', in *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays* (Delhi : Orient Longman, 1987) 20-59.

dynamics of cultures. G. Balandier objects to 'tradition' being viewed as something fixed, or as "conformity to timeless norms". In his view traditional society is "not condemned to being a mere prisoner of its own past."[8] A long time ago it was realized that one of the most serious components of tradition, myth, was itself a social charter, with a strong political function, and therefore subject to manipulation and radical transformation as it came to validate changing social structures or practices.

Balandier shows that today traditionalism takes many forms. A system may, without altering its outward form, perform new functions and have new aims. There is also a form of traditionalism in which traditions are manipulated to give meaning to new realities or to express and draw attention to political demands on a modernist state. Tradition-alism can be "revived as a weapon in the service of ends that are the opposite of tradition." We may also quote Romila Thapar[9] on tradition in Indian history :

> Traditions are not self-created : they are consciously chosen, and the choice from the past is enormous. We tend, therefore, to choose that which suits our present needs. The choice has its own logic   and we are perhaps not fully aware of the directions which such choices may take.

If by its very nature tradition is changeable, we also know that tradition can be forged, that too in a non-political context. Today the harmonium is universally used as accom-paniment in classical vocal music, except in the pristine Dhrupad form. It is accepted, by the younger generation at least, as integral to the classical *paramparā*, although official bodies like A.I.R. resisted it for some time. Yet the harmonium is by its very tonal system unsuited to a music distinguishing twenty-two intervals within the octave, and it came into the country with early Christian missionaries who

---

8. Balandier, G. *Political Anthropology* (London : Penguin, 1970).

9. Romila Thapar, *Cultural Transaction and Early India : Tradition and Patronage* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1987).

needed portable instruments for the conduct of their church services.

Indian archaeology has passed the stage at which its aims remained confined to pushing back the antiquity of Indian civilization, to filling in a space-and-time grid of protohistoric cultures (not that the grid is now complete : for example, we know little about post-Harappan Kutch or about Orissa up to the early iron age), or to establishing artefactual correlations across sites and cultures. The academic world is poised for intensive enquiry into the impact of technological change, land use systems and culture contact on the nature of social structures. Much, however, will depend on the rigour with which we (re) define the protohistoric 'cultures' in archaeological terms, on the interest we take in the later historical periods of the regions on which we research, and whether the leading archaeological departments in the country will train their postgraduate students in the theoretical fields of economic and political anthropology. Much will also depend on whether we survey our existing field methods intelligently and critically, rather than view excavation procedure as a given series of formulaic practices to be mechanically carried out; on whether we will improve our techniques of stratification and field recording.

Bibliography

Agrawal D. P. 1969. "The Copper Hoards Problem." *Asian Perspectives* 12, 113-119.

—— 1971. *The Copper Bronze Age in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).

Allchin B. 1979. "Stone Blade Industries of Early Settlements in Sind." In M. Taddei, ed., *South Asian Archaeology 1977* (Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale), 173-211.

—— 1982. "Substitute Stones." In G. L. Possehl, ed., *Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford and IBH), 233-238.

Allchin F. R. 1963. *Neolithic Cattle Keepers of South India* (Eiden: E. J. Brill).

—— 1969. "Early Cultivated Plants in India and Pakistan." In P. J. Ucko and G. W. Dimbleby, (eds.), *The Domestication and Exploitation of Plants and Animals* (London: Duckworth), 323-329.

—— 1982. "Antecedents of the Indus Civilization." *Wheeler Memorial Lecture* (London: British Academy).

Allchin F. R. and B. Allchin 1974. "The Relationship of Neolithic and Later Settled Communities with those of Late Stone Age Hunters and Gatherers." In R. S. Sharma and V. Jha, (eds.), *Indian Society: Historical Probings in Memory of D. D. Kosambi* (Delhi: Peoples Publishing House), 45-66.

Ardeleanu-Jansen A. 1983. "Stone Sculptures from Mohenjodaro." In M. Jansen and G. Urban, (eds.), *Reports on Field Work at Mohenjodaro: Interim report I.* Forschungsprojekt Mohenjodaro Aachen, 139-158.

Audouze F. and C. Jarrige 1978. "Perspectives et limites de l'interpretation anthropologique des habitats en archeologie." Paper for the Colloquium on the Archaeology of Iraq (Paris: CNRS).

Bhardwaj H. C. 1970. "Problem of Advent of Copper in India." *Indian Journal of the History of Sciences 5*, 229-237.

—— 1981-83. "Studies in Ancient Indian Technology." *Puratattva* 13-14, 139-40.

—— (ed.) 1987. *Archaeometry of Glass,* Fourteenth Interna-

tional Congress on Glass, New Delhi. Indian Ceramic
Society, Calcutta.

Chakrabarti D. K. 1976. "The beginning of Iron in India."
Antiquity 50, 114-124.

——— 1985. "The issues of the Indian Iron Age." In S. B. Deo
and K. Paddayya, (eds.), *Recent Advances in Indian
Archaeology* (Pune : Deccan College), 74-88.

Champakalakshmi R. 1975-76. "Archaeology and the Tamil
Literary Tradition." *Puratattva* 8, 110-122.

Chattopadhyaya B. D. 1975-76. "Indian Archaeology and the
Epic Traditions." *Puratattva* 8, 67-72.

Chowdhury K. A., K. S. Saraswat and G. M. Buth 1977.
Ancient Agriculture and Forestry in North India (Delhi :
Asia Publishing House).

Cleland J. H. 1986. "Lithic Analysis and Culture Process in
the Indus Region." In J. Jacobson, (ed.), *Studies in the
Archaeology of India and Pakistan* (Delhi : Oxford and
IBH), 91-116.

Cleuziou S. 1986. "Dilmun and Makkan During the Third and
Early Second Millennia." In H.al Khalifa and M. Rice,
(eds.), *Bahrain Through The Ages* (London : KPI), 143-155.

Cleuziou S. and M. Tosi 1989. "The Southeastern Frontier Of
The Ancient Near East." In K. Frifelt and P. Sorensen,
(eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1985* (London : Curzon),
14-48.

Dales G. F. 1977. "Shifting Trade Patterns between the Iranian
Plateau and the Indus Valley." In J. Deshayes, (ed.), *Le
plateau Iranien et l'Asie centrale* (Paris : CNRS), 67-78.

Deo S. B. 1973. *Problem of South Indian Megaliths* (Dharwar :
University Press).

——— 1982. "The Vidarbha Megaliths." *Bulletin of the Deccan
College Postgraduate and Research Institute* 41, 27-32.

——— 1985. "The Megaliths." In S. B. Deo and K. Paddayya,
(eds.), *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* (Pune :
Deccan College), 89-99.

Dhavalikar M. K. 1973. "Development and Decline of the
Deccan Chalcolithic." In D. P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh,
(eds.), *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology* (Bombay :
TIFR), 138-147.

——— 1979. "Early Farming Cultures of Central India." In

D. P. Agrawal and D. K. Chakrabarti, (eds.), *Essays in Indian Protohistory* (Delhi: B. R. Publications), 229-245.

—— 1981-83. "Chalcolithic Cultures: A Socio-economic Perspective." *Puratattva* 13-14, 63-80.

—— 1984. "Ethnoarchaeology in India." *Bulletin of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute* 43, 49-67.

—— 1985. "Cultural Ecology of Chalcolithic Maharashtra." In S. B. Deo and K. Paddayya, (eds.), *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* (Pune: Deccan College), 65-73.

Dhavalikar M. K. and G. L. Possehl 1974. "Subsistence Pattern of an Early Farming Community of Western India." *Puratattva* 7, 39-46.

Dhavalikar M. K., H. D. Sankalia and Z. D. Ansari 1988. *Excavations at Inamgaon.* Vol. I (Pune: Deccan College).

Dikshit K. N. 1979. "The Ochre Coloured Ware Settlements in the Ganga Yamuna Doab." In D. P. Agrawal and D. K. Chakrabarti, (eds.), *Essays in Indian Protohistory* (Delhi: B. R. Publications), 285-299.

—— 1982. "The Neolithic Frontiers of Kashmir." *Man and Environment* 6, 30-36.

During Caspers E.C.L. 1979. "Caricatures, Grotesques and Glamour in Indus Valley Art." In M. Taddei, (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1977* (Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale).

Fairservis W. A. 1967, 1978. "The Origin, Character and Decline of an Early Civilization." Reprinted in G. L. Possehl, (ed.), *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (Delhi: Vikas), 66-89.

Fentress M. 1979. "Indus Charms and Urns: Religious Diversity at Harappa and Mohenjodaro." *Man and Environment* 3, 99-104.

Gaur R. C. 1973. "Lal Qila and the OCP Problem." In D. P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh, (eds.), *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology* (Bombay: TIFR), 143-153.

Ghosh A. 1982. "Deurbanization of the Harappan Civilization." In G. L. Possehl, (ed.), *Harappan Civilization: Contemporary Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford and IBH), 321-324.

Hegde K.T.M. 1973. "A Model for Understanding Ancient

Indian Iron Metallurgy." *Man* 8, 416-421.

―――― 1975. "The Painted Grey Ware of India." *Antiquity* 49, 187-190.

―――― 1978. "Sources of Ancient Tin in India." In T. A. Wertime and J. S. Olin, (eds.), *The Search for Ancient Tin* (Washington : Smithsonian Institution), 39-42.

―――― 1985. "Scientific Studies in Indian Archaeology." In S. B. Deo and K. Paddayya, (eds.), *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* (Pune : Deccan College), 100-109.

Hegde K.T.M., R. V. Karanth and S. Sychanthavong 1982. "On the Composition and Technology of Harappan Microbeads." In G. L. Possehl, (ed.), *Harappan Civilization : A Contemporary Perspective* (Delhi : Oxford and IBH), 239-344.

Heine-Geldern R. 1969. "The Meaning of the Megaliths." In J. V. Ferreira *et al.*, (eds.), *Essays in Ethnology* (Bombay : New Literature Publ.), 294-327. (1st publ. 1959 in German.)

Jarrige, J. F. and M. U. Hassan 1989. "Funerary Complexes in Baluchistan at the end of the Third Millennium B. C." In K. Frifelt and P. Sorensen, (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1985* (London : Curzon), 150-166.

Jayaswal V. and K. Krishna 1986. *An Ethno-Archaeological View of Indian Terracottas* (Delhi : Agam Kala).

Kenoyer J. M. 1981. "Shell Working Industries of the Indus Civilization." *Paléorient* 10, 49-63.

Kesarwani A. 1984. "Harappan Gateways : A Functional Reassessment." In B. B. Lal and S. P. Gupta, (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilizations* (Delhi : Books and Books), 63-73.

Kuldeep K. Bhan 1989. "Late Harappan Settlements of Western India." In J. M. Kenoyer, (ed.), *Old Problems and New Perspectives in the Archaeology of South Asia* (Madison : University of Wisconsin), 219-242.

Kuppuram G. 1989. *Ancient Indian Mining Metallurgy and Metal Industries* (Delhi : Sundeep).

Lad Gauri 1983. *Mahabharata and Archaeological Evidence* (Pune : Deccan College).

Lal B. B. 1968. "A Deluge? Which Deluge?" *American Anthropologist* 70, 857-863.

———— 1972. "The Copper Hoard Culture of the Ganga Valley." *Antiquity* 46, 282-287.

———— 1981. "The Two Indian Epics vis-a-vis Archaeology." *Antiquity* 55, 27-34.

———— 1982. "West was West and East was East." In G. L. Possehl, (ed.), *Harappan Civilization : Contemporary Perspective* (Delhi : Oxford and IBH), 335-338.

Lechevallier M. 1979. "L'industrie lithique d'Amri." *Paléorient* 5, 281-295.

Leshnik L. S. 1972. "Pastoral Nomadism in the Archaeology of India and Pakistan." *World Archaeology* 4, 150-166.

———— 1973. "Land Use and Ecological Factors in Prehistoric North West India." In N. Hammond, (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology* (London : Duckworth), 67-84.

———— 1974. *South Indian 'Megalithic' Burials : The Pandukal Complex* (Wiesbaden : Steiner Verlag).

Leshnik L. S. and G. D. Sontheimer 1975. *Nomads and Pastoralists in South Asia* (Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz).

Makkhan Lal 1981. *Settlement History and Rise of Civilization in Ganga Yamuna Doab* (Delhi : B. R. Publications).

———— 1986. "Iron Tools, Forest Clearance and Urbanization in the Gangetic Plain." *Man and Environment* 10, 83-90.

Malik S. C. 1968. *Indian Civilization : The Formative Period* (Simla : IIAS).

Mate M. S. 1969-70. "Early Historic Fortifications in the Ganga Valley." *Puratattva* 3, 58-69.

Meadow R. 1981. "Early Animal Domestication in South Asia." In H. Haertel (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1979* (Berlin : D. Reimer), 143-179.

Misra V. N. 1976. "Evidence of Culture Contact Between Terminal Stone Age Hunter-Gatherers and Contemporary farmers." In Udai Vir Singh, (ed.), *Archaeological Congress and Seminar 1972* (Kurukshetra : University Press), 115-121.

Mughal M. R. 1970. "The Early Harappan Period in the Greater Indus Valley and Northern Baluchistan." Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Murty M.L.K. 1985a. "Some Traditional Methods of Food Preservation and Storage." In *Les techniques de conservation des grains a long terme 3* (Paris : CNRS), 47-59.

—— 1985b. "Ethnoarchaeology of the Kurnool Cave Area." *World Archaeology* 17, 192-205.

Murty M.L.K. and G. D. Sontheimer 1980. "Prehistoric Background to Pastoralism in the Southern Deccan." *Anthropos* 75, 163-184.

Nagar Malti 1975. "Role of Ethnographic Evidence in the Reconstruction of Archaeological Data." *Eastern Anthropologist* 28, 13-22.

—— 1983. "Ethnoarchaeology in the Bhimbetka Region." *Man and Environment* 7, 61-69.

Narain L. A. 1979. "The Neolithic Cultures of Eastern India." In D. P. Agrawal and D. K. Chakrabarti, (eds.), *Essays in Indian Protohistory* (Delhi : B. R. Publications), 301-309.

Narasimhaiah B. 1980. *Neolithic and Megalithic Cultures in Tamil Nadu* (Delhi : Sundeep Prakashan).

Paddayya K. 1973. *Investigations into the Neolithic Culture of the Shorapur Doab* (Leiden : Brill).

—— 1982. *The Acheulian Culture of the Hunsgi Valley* (Pune : Deccan College).

—— 1985. "Theoretical Archaeology". In S. B. Deo and K. Paddayya, (eds.), *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* (Pune : Deccan College), 6-16.

—— 1991-92. "The Ashmounds of South India." *Bulletin of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute* 51-52, 573-626.

Pande B. M. 1970. "The Neolithic in Kashmir." *The Anthropologist* 17, 25-41.

Pant R. K. 1979. "Functional Studies on Stone Blades : Microwear Patterns." *Man and Environment* 3, 83-85.

Possehl G. L. 1977. "The End of a State and the Continuity of a Tradition." In R. Fox, (ed.), *Realm and Region in Traditional India* (Durham : Duke University), 234-254.

—— 1978. *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (Delhi : Vikas).

—— 1979. "Pastoral Nomadism in the Indus Civilization." In M. Taddei, (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1977* (Naples : Instituto Universitario Orientale), 537-551.

—— 1980. *Indus Civilization in Saurashtra* (Delhi : B. R. Publication).

—— 1986. "African Millets in South Asian Prehistory." In J. Jacobson, (ed.), *Studies in the Archaeology of India and*

Pakistan (Delhi: Oxford and IBH), 237-256.

Ratnagar S. 1986. "An Aspect of Harappan Agricultural Production." *Studies in History* 2, 137-153.

——— 1987. "Pastoralists in the Prehistory of Baluchistan." *Studies in History* 3, 137-154.

Ray A. and D. K. Chakrabarti 1975. "Studies in Ancient Indian Technology and Production: A Review." *JESHO* 18, 219-232.

Ray Niharranjan 1975-76. "Technology and Social Change in Early Indian History." *Puratattva* 8, 132-139.

Roux Valentine 1985. "Outilage Agricole et structure sociale agraire." In H. P. Francfort, (ed.), *Prospections archéologiques au nord-ouest de l'Inde*, 67-87, Editions Recherche sur les civilizations.

Roy T. N. 1983. *The Ganges Civilization* (Delhi: Ramananda Vidya Bhavan).

Sankalia H. D. 1972-73. "The Cemetery H Culture." *Puratattva* 6, 12-19.

——— 1973a. "Ecological Background of the Chalcolithic Cultures of India." In K. Kennedy and G. Possehl, (eds.), *Ecological Backgrounds of South Asian Prehistory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 132-165.

——— 1937b. *Ramayana: Myth or Reality?* (Delhi: Peoples Publishing House).

Sankalia H. D., S. B. Deo and Z. D. Ansari 1971. *Chalcolithic Navdatoli* (Pune: Deccan College).

Shaffer J. G. 1981. "The Protohistoric Period in the Eastern Punjab." In A. H. Dani (ed.), *Indus Civilization: New Perspectives*, 65-102, Islamabad.

Sharma G. R. 1980. *History to Prehistory: Archaeology of the Ganga Valley and the Vindhyas*. Dept. of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology, Allahabad.

Sharma R. S. 1975-76. "The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware." *Puratattva* 8, 63-67.

Shinde V. 1988-89. "An Experimental Study of the Technology of Stone Tool Manufacture." *Bulletin of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute* 47-48, 311-317.

Srivastava K. M. 1979. *Community Movements in Protohistoric India* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).

Sundara A. 1975. *The Early Chamber Tombs of South India*

(Delhi : University Publishers).

Suraj Bhan 1973. "The Sequence and Spread of Prehistoric Cultures in the Upper Sarasvati Basin." In D. P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh, (ed.), *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology* (Bombay : TIFR), 252-263.

Thapar B. K. 1974. "Problems of the Neolithic Cultures of India." *Puratattva* 7, 61-65.

—— 1978. "Early Farming Communities in India." *Journal of Human Evolution* 7, 11-22.

—— 1985. "Fresh Light on the Neolithic Cultures of India." In K. N. Dikshit, (ed.), *Archaeological Perspective on India Since Independence* (Delhi : Books and Books), 37-43.

Tripathi V. 1976. *The Painted Grey Ware : An Iron Age Culture of Northern India* (Delhi : Concept).

—— 1982. "Antiquity of Iron in Madhya Pradesh." In R. K. Sharma, (ed.), *Indian Archaeology : New Perspectives* (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan), 257-263.

—— 1984-85. "From Copper to Iron." *Puratattva* 15, 75-79.

Tusa S. 1979. "The Swat Valley in the Second and First Millennia B. C. : A Question of Marginality." In M. Taddei, (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1977* (Naples : Instituto Universitario Orientale), 674-694.

Vishnu-Mittre and R. Savithri 1982. "Food Economy of the Harappans." In G. L. Possehl, (ed.), *Harappan Civilization : A Contemporary Perspective* (Delhi : Oxford and IBH), 205-221.

Weisgerber G. 1984. "Makan and Meluhha : Third Millennium Copper Production in Oman." In B. Allchin, (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1981* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press), 196-200.

II

Linguistics and the Study of Early Indian History

K. MEENAKSHI

History has received valuable help from research in linguistics and its significance has not been understood by many historians. For example, the establishment of different families such as Indo-European, Uralic, Dravidian, Altaic, Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman), Semitic, Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and so on, by the comparative linguists is very useful in distinguishing borrowed words or linguistic features from the native language. The analysis of borrowed words throws light on the contact of cultures and on the relations of people, just as archaeologists make inferences from the distribution of pottery, ornaments and weapons. For instance, identification of the Sanskrit word *lāṅgalam* meaning 'plough' as a loan word from a non-Aryan language is very significant inasmuch as it throws light on the nature of the relationship between the speakers of Aryan and non-Aryan languages. Similarly the mutual influence of these linguistic groups can be observed in the structure of these languages. This chapter discusses such linguistic features and loan words, found in the languages of the Indian subcontinent relating them to the social process which led to the development of such features.

All languages change and various factors are involved in such a change. Thus, linguistic changes noticed in the speech of successive generations are natural and spontaneous. Some other kinds of changes occur when there is contact between languages belonging to either the same or different families. There is a third kind of change in languages which occurs parallel to social change and reflects the latter.

It is interesting to note that all three factors are involved in the evolution of the language which we call Indo-Aryan (IA). A certain phonetic loss observed in Middle Indic is an example of the first type of change. Contact with the non-Aryan linguistic group led to structural change and borrowing of words of non-Aryan origin. Ascendancy of the Prakrit language with the patronage of the then rulers and religious movements such as Buddhism, Jainism and the subsequent eclipse of Sanskrit and the codification of a higher variety of Sanskrit by the then grammarians such as Pāṇini and Patañjali are all the outcome of the politico-religious conditions of the period.

This chapter is mainly concerned with the second type of change which occurred in the development in Indo-Aryan.

Resemblances between the languages of Europe and Sanskrit had been noticed for a long time. Sir William Jones is considered to have initiated scientific comparison of these languages. The similarities between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German and so on were so close and so striking that by comparing them, it was possible to gradually establish their common ancestor with a hypothetical reconstruction of their parent speech, in its phonology,[1] morphology, syntax and vocabulary. The comparativists have been led to the conclusion that widely different languages spoken over large areas of Europe and Asia, ranging from Irish, in western Europe to the languages of northern India, are closely related and descended from a common ancestor which they named as Indo-European (IE) or taking it further back, Indo-Hittite.

Nothing is definitely known about the original home of the IE speakers. One theory maintains that the original IE speakers seem to have inhabited the plains of eastern Europe, particularly the area north of the Black Sea. Archaeological remains in the south Russian steppes are quoted as evidence of this. The Indo-Europeans were believed to have spread to the west and to the south from their original home. A section of Indo-European speakers are believed to have migrated first to Iran and from there to the north-west of India where they encountered the indigenous people who spoke non-Aryan

1 See the Glossary for Technical terms.

languages.

Languages tend to converge gradually in structure and vocabulary with their neighbours. This process is complementary to that of their gradual divergence from their common ancestor. The direction of change is towards the structure of the neighbouring language. Linguistic convergence can take place, when there is close contact between the linguistic groups over a long period and such contact is possible in various contexts such as invasion and subsequent conquest, migration, trade relations, and so on. It is generally believed that in such situations barriers of a cultural and social nature decrease gradually. Such an intimate contact between linguistic groups leads to the formation of linguistic areas—an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found to belong to the other members of (at least) one of the families (Emeneau 1956). In other words, the resemblances between languages which are the result of contact rather than common origin, such as numeral classifiers in Indo-Aryan languages which clearly originated at the eastern end of the sub-continent, are typically associated with languages of the Sino-Tibetan groups.

Linguistic areas are of interest from a number of points of view. They raise questions about the historical contact between the speakers of languages belonging to different families and the direction of borrowing of linguistic features between the languages in contact. This in turn raises the question concerning the mechanism by which linguistic convergence takes place and the social conditions which favoured it.

The Indian linguistic area is one of the larger areas involving hundreds of languages from four major language families—Indo-Aryan (a branch of Indo-European), Dravidian, Munda (Austro-Asiatic) and Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan) (Figs. 2.1-7); of these the first two have been the major contributors to the development of Indian culture and society and rich data of historical depth are available from these for the study of convergence, both linguistic and cultural.

Modern Indian languages, irrespective of their family affiliation, show a remarkable similarity. The number of linguistic features binding IA with IE and modern Dravidian with old Dravidian is gradually diminishing, and it is claimed

that convergence of this sort may actually eradicate genetic boundaries between language families and result in the formation of new relationships and of a new language family which will be neither IA nor Dravidian (Andronov 1964b).

Such typological similarities are gradual developments, the beginning of which can be traced back to the period when these linguistic groups came into contact with each other for the first time in the northwest of India when the Aryan-speaking community migrated there. The period of this early contact is roughly about 1500 B.C. It is claimed that the process leading to the development of a linguistic area as an "Indianization" process of the immigrant IA-speakers is possible only through an "extensive bilingualism", the only social factor which accounts for the process (Emeneau 1956).

Many of the features later identified as being areal by linguists, had been noticed already in the grammars as early as in Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar*. Jules Bloch, Andronov, Colin Masica, F. C. Southworth and some others also list a number of significant areal features. However, it was Emeneau (1956) who applied for the first time the concept of a linguistic area in an organized manner and gave a clear definition. Some of these works not only identify the common linguistic traits, they also investigate the historical and social contexts in which linguistic convergence took place.

Indian Linguistic Areal Features

A. Phonological

Retroflex consonants are common to all Indian languages. It is said that this feature is an acquisition in IA. It has been widely accepted that a new contrast between dental and retroflex stops developed in IA following the pattern of non-Aryan languages, for example, *kṛta kaṭa*. It is claimed that Dravidian speakers, who were bilingual, and who learnt IA as the second language, introduced this new contrast similar to the pattern in their first language/mother tongue (Emeneau 1956). This new contrast can be noticed from very early stages (for example, *Ṛg Veda*) of IA.

Andronov adds some areal features which are developed in Middle Indic : (Andronov 1964-6).

   i.   Simplification of consonant clusters in IA in accordance with the Dravidian phonological pattern.
agni (Skt) —➤ *aggi* (MIA)

   ii. The frequent voicing, deletion of inter-vocalic stops also in accordance with older Dravidian pattern.
parīta —➤ *parīdo* (voicing); *vadana* —➤ *vana* (deletion of inter-vocalic stops)

B. Morphological

   i.   Echo-words. (Hindi) *cāy-vāy;* (Tamil) *puli-kili*

   ii. Classifier or quantifiers—the pattern of which is numeral + classifier. For example, *dujan/lok* 'two people' (*jan/lok* is classifier); *enimidi manṭi manuṣulu* 'eight men' (*manṭi* classifier)

  iii. The absence of dual number (originally present in OIA lost in Middle Indic). MIA has only singular and plural. Prakrit. *aggi* (sg), *aggau/aggo* (pl)

C. Syntactic

   i. Use of conjunctive participle/gerund
(Sanskrit) *grham gatvā annam khādati*
(Tamil) *viṭṭukkup pōy cōru uṇkirān*
Having gone home, he eats rice
(*gatvā* and *pōy* are gerund)

   ii. Dative subject construction
(Hindi) *usko bhūkh lagī hai*
(Tamil) *avanukku pacikkiṛatu*
He is/feels hungry

  iii. Enclitic particle
(Sanskrit) *api*
(Tamil) *um*
(Sanskrit) *api* has five usages :
        (a) also (b) and (c) even (d) summing up
        (e) interrogative
(Tamil)   *um* (a) also (b) and (c) even (d) summing up
        cāttan um korran um
        Cattan and Korran,
        korran um varuvān

Korran also will come.
kuravar um añcum kunru
Even Kuravar is afraid of this hillock.
tamil nāṭṭu mūvēntar um vantārkaḷ
All the three kings of Tamil *naṭu* came.

(Sanskrit) *kuryām harasya api pinākapāṇeḥ*
I am capable of hitting even Hara Pinakapani
śatrughnas ca api bharatam
Satrughna too/also (is a follower of) Bharata
trayāṇām api lokānām
All the three worlds.

iv. Compound verbs

Compound verb	Main verb + Auxiliary		
(Hindi)	*karke*		*dekho*
	doing		see
	Try to do it		
(Tamil)	*ceytu*	*pār*	
	doing	see	
	nāṉ	*ataic*	*ceytu*	*pārttēṉ*
	I	it	to do	attempt
	I tried to do it.		

v. Absence of morphologically marked 'have'

(Hindi)	*uske*	*pās*	*kār*	*hai*
(Tamil)	*avaṉ*	*iṭam*	*kār*	*irukkiṉatu*
	He has a car.			

vi. Use of post-position

(Sanskrit)	*nagarasya*	*pārśve*
(Hindi)	*śahar ke*	*pās*
(Tamil)	*nakarattukku*	*aruke*
	city	near
	Near the city	

vii. Placement of quotative on Dravidian pattern

(Tamil) *'nāḷai varuvēṉ' eṉru avaṉ coṉṉāṉ*
He said, 'I will come tomorrow'
(Marathi) *tumhi ḍhākyās jāṇār mhaṇūn me aikle*

'you are going to Dhaka' (Quotative) I heard.
enṟu (Tamil), *mhaṇūn* (Marathi) (Quotative)

D. Word Order

i. | S (ubject) | | O (bject) | | V (erb) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Hindi) | *usne* | *ek* | *gāḍi* | *kharīdi* |
| (Bengali) | *se* | *ekṭa* | *gāri* | *kineche* |
| (Tamil) | *avan* | *oru* | *kār* | *vāṅkinān* |
| | He | one | car | bought |

He bought a car

ii. Noun preceded by adjective/genitive/demonstrative/numeral and so on

Adj + noun

(Tamil)	*nalla*	*paiyan*
(Hindi)	*acchā*	*laḍkā*
	good	boy

Genitive noun

(Tamil)	*nāy*	*-in*	*vāl*
(Hindi)	*kutte*	*-kī*	*pūch*
	Dog's	tail	

Dem + noun

(Tamil)	*antap*	*paiyan*
(Hindi)	*vah*	*laḍkā*
	That	boy

Numeral + noun

(Tamil)	*mūnru*	*paiyaṅkaḷ*
(Hindi)	*tīn*	*laḍkon*
	Three	boys

The direction of borrowing is clear in certain areal features. The following features in Dravidian are borrowed from IA :

1. The loss of short *e* and *o* in Brahui.
2. The development of nasal vowels and diphthongs of an IA type in Brahui and Kurukh.
3. The development of aspirate consonants in some of the modern Dravidian languages.
4. The loss of morphological negative construction and introduction of syntactic negative construction in modern languages on IA pattern.

Syntactic negative construction

(Tamil)	*avaṉ*	*vara - v - illai*
(Hindi)	*vah*	*āyā* *nahīn*

He did not come.

Morphological negative construction

(Old Tamil) *turakkuvaṉ*   *all - φ - aṉ*
                          renounce   not - he

He will not renounce.

Relative Chronology

Introduction of retroflexion, use of gerund and change in the placement of *iti* are all of the highest antiquity in the records. Since onomatopoetics occur in the Vedic texts, and there is at least one form, *budbuda* occurring in the *Ṛg Veda* with a probable areal etymology. This trait too is of great antiquity (Emeneau 1971). All the other traits may have been introduced at a later period (Middle Indo-Aryan or Modern Indo-Aryan).

Vocabulary

In the initial stages of contact between two linguistic groups, the lexical items are the first to travel across the boundary and borrowing of words is in both directions. A number of words of non-Aryan origin are identified even in the earliest stages of IA.

It is the loan words from IA, in Dravidian languages that show the most striking influence. It may be mentioned that the IA language affected Dravidian languages individually at a different point of time as the branching off of Dravidian languages is supposed to have taken place much earlier (Adronov 1964a).

Though contact started even at the early period, the loan words in the Vedic literature are comparatively few. The Vedic language was the possession of priests, and they zealously guarded its purity against corruption of any kind but still a few words of non-Aryan origin succeeded in making their entry into the Vedic language. In all probability, there must have been a considerable time-lag between the words becoming current in IA and their being admitted into the sacred language. It is likely that there were many more loan words in their popular speech. The words such as *ulūkhala* (mortar),

kaṭuka (pungent), *khala* (threshing floor), *daṇḍa* (stick), *lāṅgalam* (plough) and so on are found in the *Ṛg Veda* itself. The later Vedic *Samhitās* add a few more words such as *bilva* (the wood apple tree) (AV), *kurkura* (dog) (AV) and so on.

In the epics we find the bulk of the Dravidian words which have been accepted into Sanskrit are well established. Some of these words, it may be mentioned, appear for the first time in the epics and also to a large extent in the early Pāli texts (500-300 B. C.). In view of these considerations we may fix the active period of borrowing from Dravidian into Sanskrit, as well before the Christian era (that is, late Vedic and early classical period) (Burrow 1955, 1968). The influx of a large number of Dravidian loans into Sanskrit at this period can be explained historically as this is the period in which the contact became closer. We shall come to this aspect later.

Another question of equal importance is the geographical location in which these loan words entered into Indo-Aryan. It is impossible for the major Dravidian languages of south India to have influenced Sanskrit in the early Vedic period because no evidence for contact between the south and the north is available historically before the Mauryan period, by which time some of these words had already made their entry into Sanskrit. We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that the donors in this period were the Dravidian languages spoken in the northwest, in the Ganga plain and in the classical Madhyadeśa, that is north and central Dravidian.

Regarding the loans occurring in the *Mahābhārata* (and also Pāli texts) they may probably have been borrowed from the south Dravidian languages as well, as the trade relations between the south and the north opened up in the Mauryan period. Words for gems such as *mukta* (pearl), *vidruma* or *pravāla* (coral) and so on, occur in the *Mahābhārata* and most of these gems are from the south. Ornaments such as *kambu* (bangle hewn out of the conch shell), *cūḍāmaṇi* (head ornament) and so on, also show a south Indian connection. (Lad 1983)

Certain loan words are very significant. We find a large number of words from the ecological milieu from the indigenous people. We can understand the reason for such borrowal because IA speakers could not have had names for

the flora and fauna of the region to begin with. The only choice left with them was either to borrow from the natives if available or give a descriptive name. Take for instance plant names such as *ketaki* (Pandanous odorotissimus) borrowed from Dravidian, compare Tamil *kaitai*, *arka* (Calotropis gigantea) Tamil *erukku* or animal names such as *eḍa* (sheep, ram), (Tamil *yāṭu*), *hastin* or *karin* (elephant) (descriptive term, meaning 'an animal having a hand').

Besides Dravidian, the words of Austro-Asiatic origin also are borrowed by IA. For example *tāmbūla* (betel) and words of Tibeto-Burman origin such as *mātaṅga* (elephant) are also on record.

Dravidian Borrowing from IA

It is in the vocabulary more than the structure, that Dravidian languages show a strong influence of IA language. All the Dravidian languages including the major literary languages of south India have a considerable number of words borrowed from Sanskrit and Prakrit. Even the earliest literary text, so-called Cankam texts, have Sanskrit loans. To give a few examples *ulakam* (world) (*PNP*. 176); *ciram* (head) (*PPL*. 7.4); *cunnam* (powder); *ākāyam* (< *ākāśa*) (sky) (*PNN*. 2); *āyutam* (< *āyudham*) (weapon) (*PNN*. 4) *tavam* (< *tapas*) (penance) (*PNN*. 251-2).

Emeneau (1974) discusses another interesting pan-Indian feature : the relationship between the caste structure and the vocabulary structure. Vocabulary items designate caste membership and they are paired designations of male and female. In occupational groups it is usually the male group which practises the occupation. The meaning of such terms is 'he who practises such and such occupation' in the case of males and that of the female not 'she who practises such and such occupation' but female related (mostly wife) to him who practises such and such occupation : for example, Sanskrit, *kumbhakāra* (potter), *kumbhakāri* (wife of a potter), *brāhmaṇa* (a brahmin), *brāhmaṇī* (wife of a brahmin). Compare Tamil *kuyavan* (potter), *kuyatti* (wife of a potter); *pārppāṉ* (a brahmin) and *pā(r)ppātti* (wife of a brahmin). Incidentally, these terms throw some light on the position of women. Woman is

referred to in relation to man.

Another pan-Indian feature, which Emeneau discusses, is village/house designation linked with the caste structure, for example, Malayalam *illam* (house of Nambudri Brahmin); *vīṭu* (house, especially of Nayar or Janmi) Sanskrit *pakkaṇa* (the hut of a Caṇḍāla or any outcaste, that is, a member of a low caste, a village inhabited by savages or barbarians) (*Mbh.* 12.139.12; 33, 41, 43). Marathi *paḍa* (a hamlet or a cluster of houses of agriculturalists, a ward or quarter of a town) (*DED* 3347).

Historical Implications of Indian Linguistic Area

Contact between the speakers of languages belonging to the same/different families leads to borrowing of linguistic traits from one language to another. It raises questions regarding the nature of contact, motivation for borrowal, the social and historical contexts for such convergence to take place, and above all which section of society is responsible for the transmission of linguistic traits from one language to another.

Contact between two speech communities over a long period of time leads to bilingualism. It is commonly admitted that extensive borrowing from one language to another can occur only through the agency of the bilingual section of the society. Possible contexts for the contact between the speakers of Aryan and non-Aryan languages in the early period are evolution of society, social mobility, inter-caste marriage, different occupational groups living in adjacent settlements, and so on.

It has been suggested by a number of historians (D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, Romila Thapar and others) that the composite Aryan speaking society evolved through recruiting members from both Aryan and non-Aryan speech groups. In such a situation, bilingualism is bound to develop.

The evolution of the caste structure shows that the caste of an individual may not have been decided by birth at least in the initial stages of its formation as it was formed by the assimilation of both Aryan and non-Aryan tribes. Though at a later period an individual's caste was established by birth, this appears to be flexible even in the *Brāhmaṇa* period. A number of references are available for downward and upward

mobility in the social hierarchy. A passage in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* narrates an anecdote wherein it is mentioned that the grandsons of Viśvāmitra though born of high status went down to the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy due to the curse of Viśvāmitra (*A.B.* 8.83)

A lower caste or mixed caste person is said to have been raised to a higher status, because of his possession of wisdom. For instance, Kavasa, the son of Ilusa, a slave woman, is said to have been raised to the status of a *brāhmaṇa* (A.B. 2.8.1; K.B. 12.3). The authorship of a *Brāhmaṇa* text, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is attributed to Mahīdāsa, son of a female slave. *S.B.* 11.6.2.10 records that *brāhmaṇas* declared the *kṣatriya* king Janaka to be a *brāhmaṇa* on account of his spiritual attainment and knowledge *par excellence*. In this recognition of enlightened persons belonging to the lower castes, one can notice an upgrading of the social status of an individual.

The *Dharma-śāstras* also lend support to the view that a low caste person may attain the status of a higher caste. Inferior castes can attain the status of a higher caste through higher knowledge; similarly through sinful acts higher castes are degraded to lower castes (*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 2.5.10.11).

There is an elaborate discussion in the law books on the status and inheritance rights of the children born of mixed caste marriages and grave concern is expressed about *varṇasaṁkara*, the mixing of castes. Their insistence on maintaining the purity and integrity of the *varṇa* system reveals the fact that such types of marriages were extensively found even before the *smṛti* texts were codified. These mixed caste marriages were known as *anuloma*, 'following the direction of hair', hypergamous, that is, a male of the higher caste marrying a female of a lower caste, and *pratiloma*, 'against the hair', hypogamous, the opposite of the former.

As a result of such inter-caste marriages, several mixed castes had sprung up, hence many new occupations came into existence. People were free to take up professions other than those of their own caste. We have evidence of the settlement of professional groups in areas such as *grāma*, in Buddhist texts.

All these suggest that there was a high degree of intermingling between the Aryan and non-Aryan speakers in

all aspects—social, marital, occupational and so on. This historical evidence corroborates the view of the linguists that borrowed phonemic distinctions (for example, retroflex consonants) in a language, generally indicate a high level of convergence implying a pervasive bilingualism and therefore a moderate level of social integration with the speakers of the language in which the contrast originates.

Who were the bilinguals in society? What was their motive? As mentioned earlier, the composite Aryan society was formed by recruiting members from both the Aryan and non-Aryan speakers. There is no indication of the percentage of both the groups in the new Aryan society. Probably the numerical superiority was on the side of the indigenous people. Non-Aryan members of society must have felt the need for knowing the Aryan language for communication purposes and also to identify themselves with the group into which they were incorporated. Subsequently, they may have learnt IA as a second language, their first language being a non-Aryan language. The acquisition of dental-retroflex contrast by IA establishes that non-Aryans were bilinguals and they introduced this contrast into IA in accordance with their language pattern.

Though there is no positive evidence to say exactly which variety of IA (assuming the existence of higher and lower variety) was learnt by the new entrants, yet one can make a guess from the discussion of Patañjali regarding the *brāhmaṇa's* language. He insists that *brāhmaṇas* should use pure Sanskrit. We can conclude that the newly recruited members learnt the speech variety of the respective group into which they had been absorbed.

It is well known that rituals were given an important place in the Vedic period and the priests as performers of sacrifice were considered superior. The members belonging to the non-Aryan language group may have considered the language of the *brāhmaṇas* as prestigious and tried to acquire their language.

Since *Vedas* are sacerdotal literature, they should be approached with some caution. At any rate, the language represented by the Vedic literature cannot be taken as representative of the spoken form of this linguistic group.

Patañjali's insistence on the use of pure Sanskrit in the ritual context by *brāhmaṇas* reflects the contemporary linguistic situations. It is clear that two varieties of Sanskrit existed side by side: one for the rituals and the other for daily communication. Patañjali's mention of an interesting example of two sages called Yarvāṇaḥ and Tarvāṇaḥ establishes this fact beyond any doubt. These two sages, well versed in the *Vedas*, used the proper Sanskrit sequences *yad vā naḥ* and *tad va naḥ* during the Vedic rituals (*yājne karmaṇi*), but in the other contexts they used the Prakrit forms Yarvaṇa and Tarvaṇa (by which they are called) (*M.B.* 11). The existence of a kind of diglossia situation has also been noticed in the earliest stage of IA. The immediate source of MIA dialects was not the literary form of the OIA, but some spoken variety of OIA. Existence of these two varieties obviously led to the mixing up of prakrtisms in the ritual form also. The spoken form was first mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It is stated that the *asuras* lost their battle with the *devas* because of their corrupt (*mleccha*) speech. They pronounced the linguistic form *he arayaḥ* incorrectly as *he alayaḥ* and therefore they lost the battle.

In this context there was a little room for the influence of the non-Aryan language on the sacred tongue of the priestly caste. It is not known how much difference there was between the language of the commoners and that of the priestly class in the second millenium B.C. Still, comparatively few loan words are identified even in the early Vedic period.

Later Vedic period witnesses a closer contact between these two linguistic groups and also a change in the attitude of IA speakers towards the local population.

Instances such as the evolution of caste structure by incorporating members belonging to both Aryan and non-Aryan speakers, some social mobility as reflected by inter-marriage, elevation of the sons of a slave woman like Aitareya to the role of a composer of a *Brāhmaṇa* and so on must have brought these two linguistic groups into closer and intimate contact. When the economy changed from pastoralism to agriculture, the IA speakers who were essentially pastoralists were led to depend on the non-Aryans as the latter had knowledge of iron tools and also the local seasons. In this

context the word for 'plough' in Sanskrit, *lāṅgalm*, is very significant. This word has parallels in Dravidian (compare Tamil *nāñcil*, Austro-Asiatic, Khasi *lynker* and Santali *nahel*) all meaning 'plough.' The change in economy thus led to a kind of symbiotic relation between the Aryan and non-Aryan speakers, (Thapar 1984). With their progressive expansion to the northeast and the south and the change in the economy, the Aryan speech community obviously became increasingly closer to the local population and this in turn resulted in the increase in the number of loan words.

Thus, one can notice a correlation between social and linguistic situations. Certain conclusions arrived at linguistically are corroborated with historical evidence and in fact, the change in the latter acts as a motive for linguistic change.

A Glossary of Technical Terms

Areal used in dialectology for any geographical region isolated on the basis of its linguistic characters. The study of the linguistic properties of areas—the analysis of the divergent forms they contain and their historical antecedent is known as areal linguistics. An areal classification would establish areal types (or groups) such as Indian languages, cases where it is possible to show certain linguistic features in common as a result of the proximity of the speech communities.

Aspiration (aspirate) used in phonetics for the audible breath which may accompany the articulation of a sound, for example, Sanskrit *kh*, *bh* and so on.

Bilingual(ism) a person who can speak two languages.

Cluster used in the analysis of connected speech to refer to any sequence of adjacent consonants (occurring initially, medially or finally) in a syllable such as the initial *br* of *bread*, or the medial *st* of *cluster* or the final *st* of *best*.

Consonant one of the two general categories used for the classification of speech sounds; the other being vowel.

Dative subject construction a form taken by a noun or pronoun in languages which express grammatical relationships by means of inflection. The dative case typically expresses an indirect object relationship. Dative subject construction refers to a syntactic construction wherein the dative case plays the role

of a subject.

Diglossia used in socio-linguistics in a situation where two very different varieties of languages exist throughout a speech community, each with a distinct range of social function.

Enclitic word or particle that which always occurs in association with some other word. It is a bound form, that is, a form which cannot occur on its own as a separate word.

Explicatory compound verb used in the grammatical description of the verb phrase to refer to the set of verbs subordinate to the main verb.

Gerund/Conjunctive participle used in the grammatical description to refer to the verbal derivatives such as English 'going' or 'having gone'.

Intervocalic used in phonetics to refer to a consonant sound used between two vowels as *p* in *open*.

Lexical item unit of vocabulary.

Morphology that branch of grammar which studies the structure or form of words primarily through the use of morpheme (a meaningful unit) construct. It is traditionally distinguished from *syntax* which deals with the rules governing the combination of words in sentences.

Nasal sounds produced while the soft palate is lowered to allow an audible escape of air through the nose. In nasal vowels (or nasalized) air escapes through nose and mouth simultaneously.

Onomatopoetic words words which through their segments imitate sounds that we hear around us.

(Hindi)   *ṭikṭik* 'a ticking noise'
            jagjagāna 'glitter'

Phonetic loss used to refer to the loss of speech sound.

Phonology branch of linguistics which studies the sound systems of languages.

Retroflex used in the phonetic classification of consonant sounds on the basis of their place of articulation; it refers to a sound made when the tip of the tongue is curled back in the direction of the front part of the hard palate. (Hindi *ṭ, ḍ*)

Stops used in phonetic classification of speech sounds on the basis of their manner of articulation.

Syntactic negative construction Negative or negation is a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis

which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning. Syntactic negative construction refers to a construction wherein a negative particle is used (Hindi, *nahī*) to denote negation.

Syntax See Morphology.

Speech community All who use a given language (or dialect).

Voicing used in the phonetic classification of speech sounds referring to the auditory result of the vibration of the vocal chords.

Bibliography

Andronov M. S. 1964a. "Lexicostatic Analysis of the Chronology of Disintegration of Proto-Dravidian." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 7, 2-3, 170-186.

------ 1964b. "On the Typological Similarity of New Indo-Aryan and Dravidian." *Indian Linguistics* 25, 119-26, reprinted as "Dravidian and Aryan : From the Typological Similarity to the Similarity of Forms." In *Two Lectures on the historicity of Language Families* (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University, Department of Linguistics), Publication No. 15 (1968).

Basu Jogiraj 1969. *India in the Age of the Brahmanas* (Calcutta : Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar).

Bloch Jules 1965. *Indo-Aryan from the Vedas to Modern Times*, revised by the author and translated from French by Alfred Master, *Libraire d'Amerique et d'Orient* (Paris : Adrien Maisonneuve). (Original published in Paris, 1934.)

------ 1970. *The Formation of the Marathi Language*, Translated by Dev Raj Chanana (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Burrow T. 1955. *The Sanskrit Language* (London : Faber).

------ 1968. *Collected Papers on Dravidian Linguistics* (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University, Department of Liguistics), Publication No. 13.

------ and Emeneau M. B. 1961. *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (London : Oxford University Press).

Caldwell Robert 1956. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, 3rd ed. Revised and edited by Rev. J. L. Wyatt and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, Reprint ed., (Madras : University of Madras, 1961).

Cardona George 1974. "The Indo-Aryan Languages." *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, pp. 439-450, 15th ed., Vol. 90.

Chatterji S. K. 1965. *Dravidian* (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University, Department of Linguistics), Publication No. 7.

Deshpande M. M. and Peter E. Hook (eds.) 1979. *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, Michigan Papers on South and South East Asia, No. 14, (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan).

------ 1978. *Sociolinguistic Attitudes in India* (Ann Arbor : Karoma Publications).

Emeneau M. B. 1956. "India as a linguistic area." *Language* 32, reprinted in Emeneau 1967.

———— 1967. *Collected Papers* (on Dravidian linguistics, ethnology and folktales) (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University, Department of Linguistics), Publication No. 8.

———— 1971. "Dravidian and Indo-Aryan : The Indian linguistic area." *Symposium on Dravidian Civilization* (Texas : Austin).

———— 1974. "Indian linguistic area revisited." *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics* 3, 1, also in *Contact and Convergence in South Asian Languages*, pp. 92-135, edited by F. C. Southworth and M. L. Apte (Trivandrum : IJDL, 1974).

———— and T. Burrow 1962 *Dravidian Borrowings from Indo-Aryan* (Berkeley : University of California Press).

Hock H. H. 1986. *Principles of Historical Linguistics* (The Hague : Mouton).

Kosambi D. D. 1956. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

———— 1965. *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Kuiper F. B. J. 1967. "The Genesis of a Linguistic Area." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10, 2/3, 81-102, reprinted in F. W. Southworth and M. L. Apte, (eds.) 1974, *Contact and Convergence in South Asian Languages* (Trivandrum : IJDL), 135-153.

Lad Gauri 1983. *Mahabharata and Archaeological Evidence* (Pune : Deccan College).

Masica Colin P. 1976. *Defining a Linguistic Area South Asia* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Sen Sukumar 1960. *A Comparative Grammar of Middle Indo-Aryan* (Pune : Linguistic Society of India, Deccan College).

Shafer Robert 1955. "Classification of Sino-Tibetian Languages." *Word* 11, 94-111.

Shapiro Michael C. and Harald F. Schiffman 1975. *Language and Society in South Asia* (Washington, D.C. : Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education).

Sharma R. S. 1980. *Sudras in Ancient India* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Southworth F. C. 1971. "Detecting Prior Creolization : An

Analysis of the Historical Origins of Marathi." In *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, edited by Dell Hymes (Cambridge : University of Cambridge Press), 255-276.

——— 1974. "Linguistic stratigraphy of North India." In F. C. Southworth and M. L. Apte, (ed.), *Contact and Convergence in South Asian Languages* (Trivandrum : IJDL), 201-223.

Subramanyam P. S. 1971. *Dravidian Verb Morphology* (A Comparative Study) (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University, Department of Linguistics), Publication No. 24.

Thapar Romila 1978. *Ancient Indian Social History : Some Interpretations* (Delhi : Orient Longman).

——— 1984. *From Lineage to State* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Zide Norman H. 1969. "Munda and Non-Munda Austro-Asiatic Languages." *Current Trend in Linguistics*, Vol. 5, Linguistics in South Asia, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok (The Hague : Mouton).

INDO-ARYAN LANGUAGES (AFTER SEN 1960)

Proto-Indo-Aryan (c. 1200 B.C.)
(Spoken and Literary)

Early Vedic (c. 1200-800 B.C.)
(Literary and Spoken, sharply differentiated)

Late Vedic (c. 800-500 B.C.)
(Literary and Spoken, sharply differentiated)

Sanskrit
(c. 500 B.C.—)
(Learned Literary)

Spoken Sanskrit
(Popular Literary)

First Middle Indo-
Aryan Dialects

Buddhistic Sanskrit
(200 B.C.—300 A.D.)

North-
Western

West-
Central

East-
Central

Eastern

Second Middle
Indo-Aryan

Niya Prākrit
(200-300 A.D.)

Pāli
(200 B.C.—)

The Prākrits
(Stylized)

Apabhraṃśa
(1-600 A.D.)

Third Middle Indo-
Aryan

Avahaṭṭha (600-
1200 A.D.)

Fig. 2.1

DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES (After Subramanyam 1971 : 531)

Fig. 2.2

The Munda languages (after Zide 1969 : 412)

Fig. 2.3

Tibeto-Burman Languages
The Bodish Section of Bodic (after Shafer 1955)

Bodish Sections

East Bodish Unit
Dwags (Takpa)

South Bodish Unit (Sikkim)
Groma (Tromowa)
Sikkimese
Dandzongka

Central Bodish Unit (S. Tibet, N. India, Nepal, Bhutan)
Lhoskad (Lhoke)
Sarpa
Kagate
Garhwal
Spiti
Mnyamskad (Nyamkat)
Dzad
Gtsang
Dbus
Lhasa
Sikkim
Aba (Batang)
Choni
Tseku
Darbsemdo (Tatsienlu)
Nganshuenkuan
Sotati-po
Paurong
Dru
Panakha
Panags
Nyarong
Ngamdo (Amdo)
Khams

West Bodish Unit (Kashmir)
Sbalti (Balti)
Burig (Purik)
Ladwags
Sam
Leh
Rong
Lahul

Fig. 2.4

The Baric Division (After Shafer 1955)
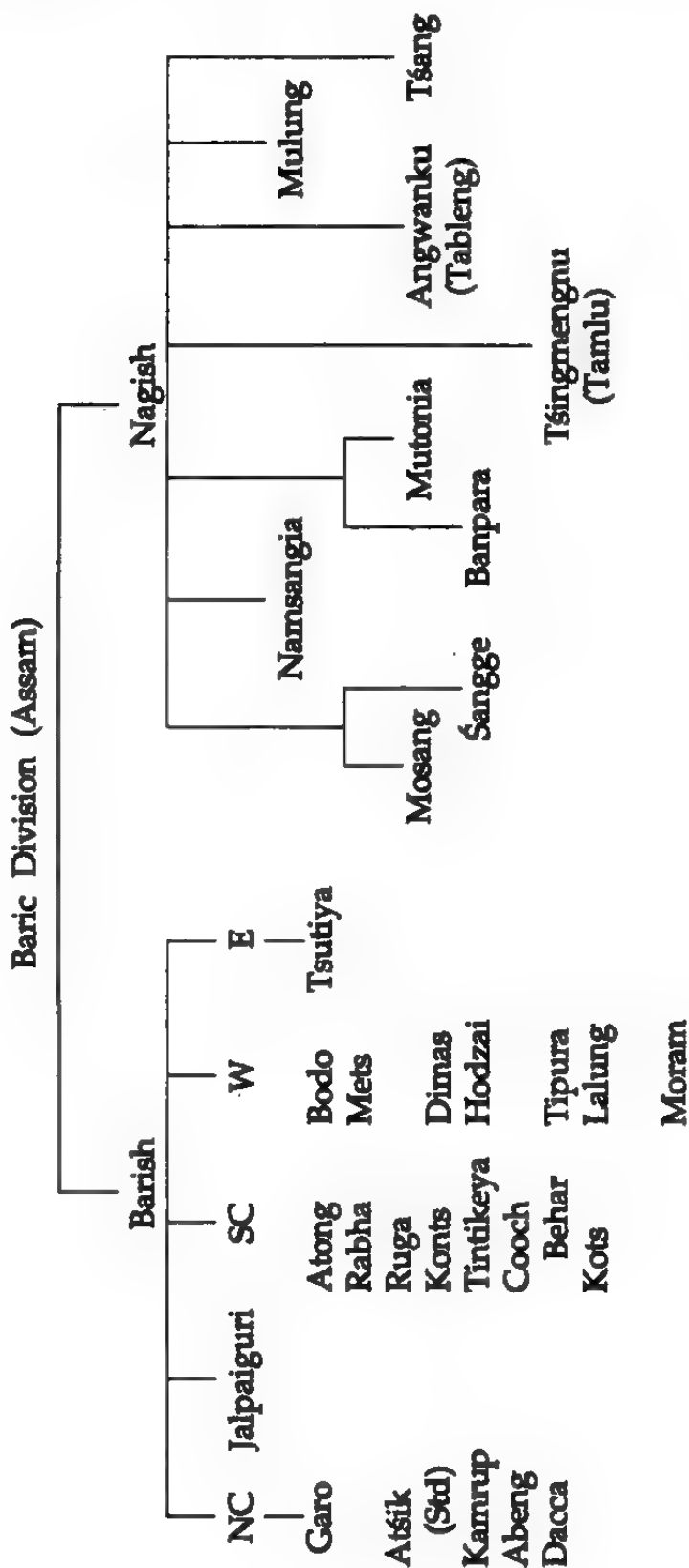
Fig. 2.5

Bodic Division (After Shafer 1955)

Bodic Division

Bodish

W. Central Himalayish
(Central Nepal)
Vaya
Tsépang
Magari

E. Himalayish
(E. Nepal)

W. Himalayish
(scattered through-
out
W. Himalayas)

Newarish
(Central Nepal)
Newari
Pahri

Digarish
(N.E.
Assam
and
Tibet)
Taying
Midu

Midz'uish
(Tibet beyond
N. E. Assam)

Hruish
(N.
Assam)

Hruso
(Aka)
Dialect A
Dialect B

Dhimalish
(Darjeeling and
Jalpaiguri)
Dhimal
Toto

Miśingish
(N. E. Assam
and into
Tibet)
Miśing (Miri)
Abor
Yano
Nyising

Dzorgaish
(N. E. Tibetan
plateau,
Szechuan &
Kansu)
Dzorgai
Korbse
Outer
Mantse
Ping Fang

West Himalayish Section of Bodic (After Shafer 1955)

West Himalayish Section

Bunan

NNW

Thebor

Sumtśu
Zangram
Sungnam
Kanam
Lippa

NW

Kanauri

Upper
Lower
Tśitkhuli
Tukpa
Kanaśi

Mantśati
Tśamba Lahuli
Ranglor

Almore

Rangkas
Darmiya

Tśandangsi
Byangsi

Dz'anggali

Eastern
Thami
Bhramu

Fig. 2.6

South Asian Language Families

(From Hock 1986 : 499)

(FROM HOCK 1986 : 499)

Fig. 2.7

Indo-Aryan

Iranian

Burushaski

Tibeto-Burman

Austro-Asiatic

Munda

Dravidian
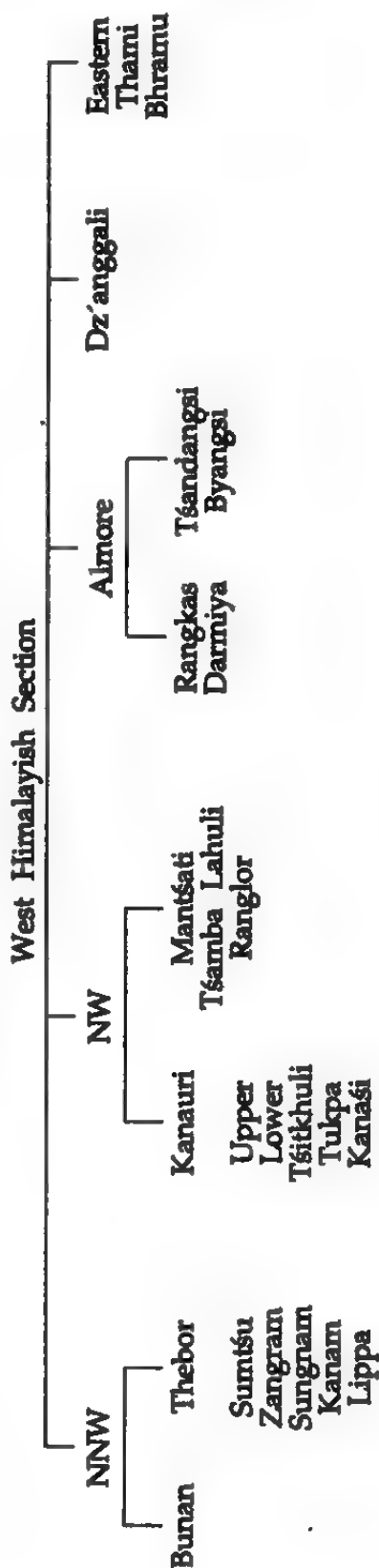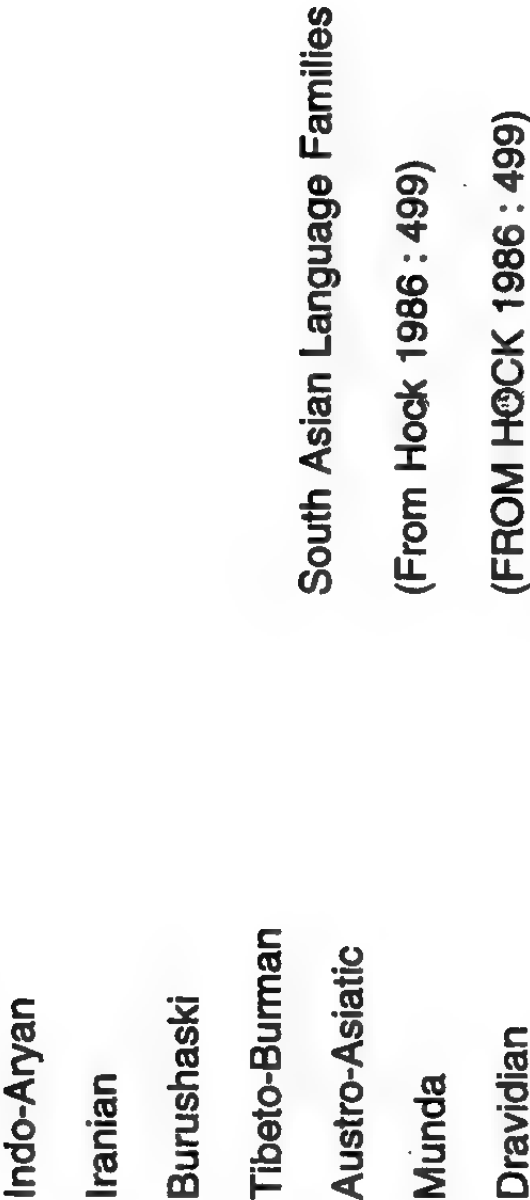
III

The First Millennium B. C. in Northern India

(Up to the end of the Mauryan period)

ROMILA THAPAR

The first millennium B.C. is a period of considerable historical change. This becomes evident from the large variety of historical source material available for this period. It is therefore difficult to treat it as a single whole and it has to be seen in thematic and chronological sections. But the wide range of source material makes it difficult to work out a clear-cut chronology, for, whereas the archaeological data is fairly precisely dated, the dating of most of the literary texts still remains controversial. Nor can these two sources be easily correlated in spite of attempts to do so. To add to the problem, the earlier theory of the invasion of northern India by a race of Aryans who conquered the indigenous peoples and established an Aryan civilization from which the essentials of Indian culture flowed, is no longer acceptable. This view was initially prevalent as a result of a particular interpretation of the Vedic corpus of texts, and scholars had made these the starting point of Indian history when only literary sources were used. But archaeological work on the Harappan and post-Harappan period and refinements in linguistic studies have led to the questioning of this theory.

A perspective on the first millennium B.C. requires the historian to keep in mind the earlier events such as the decline of the Harappan cities and the archaeological cultures which succeeded them in various parts of northern India. In some cases there was an overlap between the Late Harappan and successor cultures and in other areas the successor cultures

had an independent genesis. What is most significant is that the emphasis in interpreting the history of the early first millennium B.C. is slowly shifting from the centrality of Vedic literary sources to that of a greater inclusion of archaeological data. The history of the first millennium therefore requires a competence in examining both archaeological and literary sources and co-relating the data where possible.

Proceeding sequentially it will be necessary to consider the archaeological evidence first. The major archaeological cultures which succeeded the Harappan in northern India were : the Gandhara Grave Culture of the Swat Valley (Dani 1986); the Ochre Colour Pottery (OCP) from the mid-second millennium and the Copper Hoard artefacts believed to be of about the same period; the chalcolithic cultures usually associated with Black-and-Red ware (BRW) and Black-slipped potteries from the second millennium to the mid-first millennium B.C.; the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) from c. 1200-400 B.C.—earlier in Rajasthan and the Punjab and later in the Doab. These cultures were in some instances fairly widely distributed over northern India and in others more narrowly so. The Northern Black Polished Ware (NBP), dating to just before the middle of the first millennium B.C. is known earlier in the middle Ganga plain and later elsewhere. It eventually had an even wider distribution reaching out to many parts of the subcontinent.

It is generally thought that contemporary with some of these archaeological cultures was the corpus of Vedic compositions. The earliest of these was the *JgRg Veda*, the compilation of which some scholars would date to the latter half of the second millennium B.C. and others to the early first millennium. Subsequent to this are the *Atharva, Yajur* and *Sāma Vedas* (Gonda 1975). The compilation of hymns included in these texts come in various recensions in the *saṃhitā* sections. Attached to each *Veda* are other categories of texts composed later, such as the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. This major corpus, described by modern scholars as the Later Vedic Literature (as distinct from the *Ṛg Veda*) is generally dated to the period after the composition of the *Ṛg Veda*, up to c. 700-500 B.C. The dating is made more uncertain by the fact that the Vedic compositions were memorised and handed down orally for many centuries and could only have been

transferred to writing by about 400 B.C. It is also as well to keep in mind that these compositions were concerned with religious rituals and beliefs. They had a limited function and were composed not in the commonly used language but in a language probably limited largely to the priests. Since the precise dates for these texts remain controversial, it is difficult to equate the literary and the archaeological sources chronologically. The broader social and economic trends reconstructed from each category can be compared and correlated.

Such a correlation is of course most easily carried out in a comparative study of what we know of the material culture—the artefacts and technology from archaeological evidence—and from their descriptions in the literary sources. Various items, for example, pottery and objects made of metal, have been compared from both sources, as also the kinds of settlements and the type of society that can be reconstructed from this evidence, although the reconstructions may differ (Sharma R. S. 1983, Thapar R. 1984). The correlation has to be treated with some caution as descriptions in texts which are concerned with the performance of rituals, such as much of the Vedic corpus, can deliberately adopt technologies which are archaic so as to give an impression of antiquity to the ritual (Thapar R. 1987). There is also the reverse problem that many early literary sources have been added to in subsequent periods, and it is difficult to isolate these additions. The comparison of material culture has led to a developing interest in the technology, economy, and society of the time and inevitably also to an attempt to correlate religious ideologies with social forms. But even such a seemingly simple comparative study requires considerable caution, since artefacts have to be placed both in the wider context of their function, which is often associated with their technology, as well as, in some cases, their symbolic meaning. The technology of artefacts, that is, how they are made, why they are made in a particular way as well as their technological role, have been studied in detail by many archaeologists. But technology may not always provide the answers and other aspects have also to be considered (Binford and Binford).

Further additions to the Vedic corpus such as the *sūtra* texts are frequently dated to the period just before or just after the

mid-first millennium B.C. (Kane, Lingat). These cover a wide range of subjects from the ideal society of the *Dharma-sūtras* (giving rise to the later *Dharma-śāstras*) to the details of etymology as in Yāska's *Nirukta*. Norms relating to social duties, obligations and rites are included in the *Dharma-sūtras*, *Gṛhya-sūtras* and the *Śrauta-sūtras* which also provide information on the social obligations and required rituals of the householder. A set of these three *sūtra* texts attributed to the same author are sometimes given the label of *kalpa-sūtras*. There is also a division into *śruti*, those texts which are believed to have been revealed and therefore originally heard, such as the *Vedas*, as distinct from the *smṛti* texts which are known and memorized, such as the *sūtras*. The category of *smṛti* also included, according to some commentators, the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition, a tradition which claimed to refer to past happenings and ancient legends and covered the two epics as well as the much later texts of the *Purāṇas*. The Vedic corpus including the *Vedāṅga* or additional texts cannot be separated in time by simple chronological periodization. The above discussion is an estimate based on general scholarly opinion. Within these texts there are sections which are of an earlier date and others which are later. Therefore the chronology of such texts can only be approximate. In using these texts as source material, historians have to try and sift the different sections, some of which were composed in earlier times and some added later.

Another body of texts which were compiled much later from about the fifth century A.D. were the *Purāṇas*. Some contain a section called the *vaṃśānucarita*, which includes the genealogies of two major *kṣatriya* lineages, the Sūryavaṃśa and the Candravaṃśa. The genealogies refer to some of the names of *rājās* mentioned in the Vedic corpus but the lists of succession are often dissimilar. The early *Purāṇas* contain material which was part of the oral tradition and was later preserved in a written form. They also constitute part of what was called the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition pertaining to the past (Thapar R. 1993). A major part of each *Purāṇa* focuses on a deity and its sects and these texts therefore are essential to the evolution of what has come to be called Purāṇic Hinduism.

The problem of dating with any degree of precision also

applies to the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Historians no longer refer to an 'epic age', since it is impossible to give a uniform date to each of the epics. Each epic has a core text around which there have been many interpolations, additions and changes. The core text, perhaps that which is sometimes called the *kathā*, is generally believed to have existed by about the middle of the first millennium B.C. or possibly earlier and the changes date to periods after that (Sukhthankar, Bulcke, Brockington). At most, attempts can be made to try and date the particular segments of the epics, as for example, the episode in which Hanumān proves his identity to Sītā by giving her the signet ring of Rāma, which incident cannot be dated to a period earlier than the first century B.C. when the Indo-Greeks popularized the use of signet rings (Sankalia). Attempts to correlate the *Rāmāyaṇa* with archaeological evidence (Lal B. B. and Dikshit), remain unclear and some scholars find the attempted correlations unacceptable. Interpolations in the epics continued to be made until the late first millennium A.D. Therefore, as evidence of social history, descriptions of society in the epics may relate to early or late periods and cannot be treated as of the same time. There have been many studies of the process by which epics are memorized as part of the oral tradition and attempts have been made to apply these methods to the Indian epics as well (De Jong 1975).

Vedic compositions, on the other hand, were more carefully preserved because each *mantra* was regarded as having special powers and because they were manuals of rituals. Special care was taken to see that in their oral memorization few mistakes or additions were made. Epic literature being more popular, and being a narrative, was more open to additions being tagged on from time to time. Although studies are published on society in the period of the epics, strictly speaking it is impossible to define such an age.

The period from the fifth century B.C. sees the emergence and growth of towns. This is linked by archaeologists to the NBP culture where archaeological remains suggest characteristics of what are interpreted as urban sites. The earlier phase of the NBP is seen as pre-urban and the later as demonstrating characteristics of urban centres. However, the definition of

the process of urbanization remains a matter for further discussion (Chakrabarti 1984-85). The later phase of the NBP also seems to coincide with the corpus of Buddhist texts. But here again there is a problem with precise dating. A few sections of these texts can be dated to the fourth-third centuries B.C. as they are mentioned in the inscriptions of Aśoka, the Mauryan emperor. The larger body of texts were, as in the Vedic corpus, initially orally transmitted, although the Buddhist texts were circulated in a written form sooner than the Vedic. But in the course of preparing the Buddhist Canon (the collection of religious literature), there would again have been passages added which were of a later date than that of the Buddha's lifetime or soon thereafter.

The next phase is much more certain both in terms of chronology and narrative. This is the period of Nanda and Maurya rule when there is considerably more evidence both from Indian and non-Indian sources and where chronology can be more precise.

The survey of the first millennium B.C. in this chapter will broadly follow this chronology. Apart from the difficulties of sorting out the chronology of these various cultures, there is the further problem of interpreting the data. Earlier historians had searched among these texts for information on political history. There is little to add to this information which has already been carefully sifted through and much discussed. But now, in addition to political history, the interest of historians has broadened and includes other aspects as well, such as facets of social and economic history. These had not been analysed in detail before and much of the analyses which have been made in recent years carry new interpretations of the data.

Indological research on the Vedic texts has tended to concentrate on studies of Vedic ritual and religious ideas as well as on the analysis of Vedic Sanskrit. In both, there have also been comparative studies with neighbouring areas such as ancient Iran and with texts from other languages of the Indo-European family. It was from such studies that in the nineteenth century the theory of the Aryan race was first put forward. It was stated that with reference to India, a race of Aryans had conquered northern India and imposed their

language, Indo-Aryan, on the conquered peoples. There was confusion between biological race and language and the term 'Aryan', which was originally intended for the language, came to be applied to the race (Thapar R. 1977, 1978a). Attempts have been made to identify 'the Aryans' with the Harappans and to argue for their being indigenous to India, but the evidence for this view remains unconvincing.

Since the theory of an Aryan race has now been discarded and that of an Aryan invasion of northern India is also being seriously questioned, the discussion, in as much as it relates to Indo-Aryan, is therefore shifting to the question of how the Indo-Aryan language entered India, developed the way it did, and why it came to be gradually established as the major linguistic system of northern India. Historical evidence of Indo-European points to Indo-Aryan having developed as an intrusion into northern India (Mallory). Language can be transmitted in a variety of ways such as by migrations, by pastoralists who, although nomadic, have a close relation with settled communities, or by traders. Invasion and conquest are not the only methods of spreading a language. The evidence from the multiplicity of archaeological cultures representing diverse peoples and the influence of non-Aryan speakers on Indo-Aryan (Kuiper) supports a different concept, namely the possibility of peoples of different cultures coming into contact and making linguistic and cultural adjustments. Furthermore, the concern has shifted somewhat from the centrality of the Indo-Aryan language and religious practices to attempts to reconstruct the society of the time using both archaeological and literary data. Studies pertaining to language and religion therefore are becoming part of the larger picture of the different facets of the societies of that period.

It was previously thought that because of the large-scale conquest by the invading Aryans, they were able to establish a state system in northern India by subjugating the indigenous people who were made to work for them. If there was no such large-scale invasion, then other reasons have to be found for the evolution of the state in northern India. This was a very gradual process over many centuries and doubtless involved a wide variety of features. Scholars who have worked on the question of how states come into being—where the

state is seen as a different kind of society from that which is based on an organization of clans and tribes—have tried to explain this process. There are now many detailed studies and much discussion on the subject. It is recognized as a complicated process which requires a careful analysis of existing preconditions and the way in which these relate to each other (Fried, Steward, Service, Carneiro, Adams, Claessen and Skalnik, Friedman and Rowlands). These studies either emphasize the priority among various factors or the inter-relationships between factors such as ecology and environment, technology, economy, social organization and religious beliefs, in trying to understand the nature of a particular society. Such studies can be used in a comparative manner to ask new questions from the early Indian data as well as to suggest new ways of perceiving the society of that time.

II

When the theory of the Indo-Aryan language as an offshoot of the Indo-European language was first put forward, it was based on the extensive use of Indo-Aryan in various forms in northern India. The root of Indo-Aryan was traced to Indo-European, a language believed to have been spoken by an ancestral group which later migrated to various places through central Asia and west Asia (Mallory). Scholars working on Indo-European have been emphasizing the spread and distribution of languages based on Indo-European. The close linguistic links between Iranian and Indo-Aryan had earlier been noticed and they have received further attention in recent studies on the linguistic background to the history of north India (Cardona et al., Burrow 1973, Parpola).

The spread of Indo-Aryan was earlier believed to be based on a large-scale conquest of northern India by people recognizable physically as Aryans. There is however no archaeological evidence to support a large-scale conquest by any particular culture during this period (Possehl, Jarrige, Srivastava K. M. 1979b, Renfrew). The only widespread culture linking central Asia, Afghanistan and northwest India, was the Harappan, with some pre-Harappan links between Baluchistan and central Asia. Excavations now reveal that the Harappan

culture had as close a contact with the Gulf and Mesopotamia
(associated with pre-Semitic and Semitic languages) as with
eastern Iran and Central Asia (associated with the Indo-
European group of languages) (Ratnagar, Cleuziou, Cleuziou
and Tosi). The material remains of the Harappa culture do not
conform to the kind of society described in Vedic literature
(Thapar R. 1978). It is also debatable as to whether or not the
Harappans' were speakers of Indo-Aryan. The notion of the
Aryans being a physical people of a distinct biological race
who moved *en masse* and imposed their language on others
through conquest, has generally been discarded, as mentioned
earlier. The Aryan is identified now not by race but by
language. The spread of a language does not involve large-
scale invasion and conquest by one race over another, for it
can equally well be adopted by large numbers of people if
the language is seen as having an advantage or an importance
for them. The reason why people used or adopted a particular
language is the more important historical question. Further-
more, people belonging to different races can be found to be
speaking the same language (Cardona et al., Deshpande and
Hook). Therefore it is more correct to refer to the 'Indo-Aryan
speaking people', who may have been of mixed race but
spoke a particular language and its variants. The historian has,
therefore, to investigate how Indo-Aryan as a language entered
and spread over northern India and came to be spoken by
people who were culturally and ethnically varied. It is,
therefore, important to try and locate the different settlements
of peoples and their way of life at this time. For this, the
evidence from archaeology is most useful.

The archaeological picture at the start of the first millen-
nium B.C. in northern India indicates a variety of cultures in
various areas. (Allchin and Allchin 1982, Possehl, Agrawal and
Chakrabarti, Deo and Paddayya, Dani 1986, Ghosh A. 1989).
In some parts of the Ganga plain it has been possible to do
some detailed analyses of the nature of settlement (Lal M.
1984, Erdosy, Roy). The very broad picture that emerges is one
of distinctive cultures.

Associated with the Ganga plain was the OCP culture
which dates back to the second millennium and seems to have
had a more concentrated distribution in the upper Doab and

the area to its north-west (Sharma V. D., Gaur). Earlier thought to be a degenerate Harappan pottery, it is now conceded that it was an independent ware. It predates the PGW especially at sites in the Doab. Thus PGW settlements in this area, which have often been correlated with the people of the Vedic literature, had to meet with and adjust to another earlier culture already present in the area. More enigmatic, however, are the caches of copper objects referred to as the Copper Hoards, which have turned up during the ploughing of fields, and on fewer occasions, in the context of an excavation and are identifiable by a distinctly fashioned set of harpoons, celts, knives, daggers, fish-hooks and what have been taken to be anthropomorphic figures (Agrawal). Another view is that their function was non-utilitarian and that they may have been cult objects. The distribution of the Copper Hoards has also to be examined in terms of the differences between those found in the eastern areas of the Ganga plain and those in the Doab and further west (Yule).

The predominant culture in the western Ganga plain and its fringes was the PGW culture (Tripathi, Singh S. B., Roy). At a few sites in the Indo-Ganga watershed and Punjab, there is an overlap of Late Harappan and PGW (Joshi J. P.) suggesting that a break between the later part of the Harappan and post-Harappan settlements may not have been universal. But the data is too limited for a more definite generalization. Although the Harappan cities declined, some elements of the culture may well have continued. The distribution of the varieties of the BRW includes western India, Rajasthan, the fringes of the Doab, central India, the middle Ganga valley and some parts of the eastern Ganga plain. The distribution covers a long period starting earlier in the west. PGW and BRW are not cultures in themselves, but the cultures are so named after the distinctive pottery associated with these sites. This does not preclude other types of pottery which are associated with these sites such as the Black-Slipped and the Red Ware.

In terms of ecology and archaeology there appears to have been a distinction between the western Ganga plain and the middle Ganga plain and the evolution of cultures in these regions have, in their initial stages, to be seen as separate

(Roy, Thapar R. 1984). Similarities are more apparent by the middle of the first millennium B. C. with the distinctive Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware. The provenance of this pottery appears to be the region between Patna and Banaras where it is found in larger numbers. It spread slowly not only across the Ganga plain but also to other parts of the subcontinent. It has been regarded as something of an index to registering communication and contact, possibly through forms of exchange and trade, hence its association in its later phase with urbanization. NBP was evidently a luxury ware, not only because of its fine quality but also because the percentage of NBP in pottery assemblages tends to be small. There is occasional evidence that broken pots were repaired by rivetting. There has been some discussion on the production of these various forms of pottery: their technology, function and distribution. The reconstruction of the method of making such pottery could indicate the stages of technology in certain areas (Hegde 1975, 1978).

Pottery is not the only artefact of importance from archaeology. There is also evidence of iron from sites in the Doab and central India dating to the end of the second millennium B. C. (Pleiner, Chakrabarti 1977, 1984, 1992, Banerjee, Hegde 1973, Bhardwaj). There appears to have been no particular point from where iron technology diffused and this might support the idea that it came to be used gradually in different regions. The earliest iron objects were weapons and are generally dated to the earlier half of the first millennium B. C. Axes and other iron implements become more common later. There has been a questioning of the theory that the clearing of the monsoon forests of the Ganga plain was dependent on iron technology and that this was a crucial factor in the emergence of urban centres in this region (Ray N. R.). Some of the literary sources seem to point to the clearing of land by burning forests as is so vividly described in the burning of the Khāṇḍava-vana in the *Mahābhārata* (1.19). The use of an iron ploughshare which, it has been argued, would have been a major technological change in agricultural production, especially in the middle Ganga plain, seems' to be of a later date and is referred to in Buddhist texts. There remains a controversy as to whether references to *kṛṣṇa ayas*

in Vedic texts are to iron (Thapar R. 1978a). The significance
of the use of an iron ploughshare in changing the economy
of many parts of northern India has become a controversial
question.[1] The theory that iron technology led to the produc-
tion of an agricultural surplus which in turn transformed tribal
societies into state systems and provided the base for
urbanization is viewed by some as an insufficient factor (Lal
M. 1986). Clearly, iron technology did have an impact on those
activities where metal artefacts were used and, therefore, on
economic production. But whether a single technological
change, even if major, is enough to produce the kind of
surplus required for a qualitative change to a state system, is
doubted by some historians. The transition to a state, it is
argued, is a complex procedure which cannot be explained by
a change of technology alone.

Apart from iron another innovation of this time was the
widespread use of the horse. The site of Pirak in Baluchistan
provides some remains of the horse and clay figurines of
horsemen in the second millennium B. C. But horse remains
increase in association with PGW sites. This seems to agree
with the equally extensive use of the horse from Vedic texts,
both for drawing chariots as well as being ritually symbolic
of fertility and power, as for example in the sacrificial ritual
of the *aśvamedha*. There is also an association of cattle with
PGW sites. Archaeological evidence suggests the eating of beef
by the people of the PGW (Lal B. B. 1955) and would agree
therefore with references to the consumption of beef on ritual
and special occasions as described in Vedic literature
(Srinivasan).

Archaeological studies of the environment include geomor-
phology (the geographical study of the form of the earth),
topography, human geography and climate. The importance of
these for historical changes lies in the difference in geographi-
cal background of the various regions under discussion : the
difference between the Indus valley system and that of the
Ganga valley separated by what geographers call the Indo-
Ganga watershed,[2] the fact that the watershed region is similar

1 See chapter by Shereen Ratnagar in this volume and Chakrabarti (1992).
2 A watershed is an elevated area which keeps two river systems distinct
and separate from each other.

to the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab in elevation, but that there is a difference between this region and the lower Doab and eastern Uttar Pradesh; that there is a further drop in elevation moving eastwards to what is now north Bihar and the Ganga delta, which in turn requires a differentiation geographically between the western and the middle Ganga plain and between these and the delta region. Changes in elevation affect, among other features, the wetness and dryness of soil and the level of the water table and these in turn influence the kinds of crops which can be grown and, as we shall see, crops have a bearing on both economy and society (Chowdhury et al.). The importance of the geographical background to the study of history, particularly of early periods, is being emphasized through the use of archaeological data as well, since this data often reflect the geographical background more directly than does literary evidence.[3]

The significance of climate is also being recognized by historians. The plotting of climate change is now becoming possible as a result of paleo-botany.[4] The climate of north-western India in the third millennium B. C. appears to have been wetter than in the first millennium, although even at the later date it was probably not as dry as it is today. The gradual climatic change towards dryness may have encouraged the creation of a desert in northern Rajasthan (Vishnumitre, Gurdip Singh, Misra, Agrawal and Pande). Further there is evidence of major hydrological changes in river courses (Raikes, Ramaswamy, Misra). The Sarasvatī disappeared into the desert in north-eastern Rajasthan and the Sutlej and the Yamuna seem to have changed course (Suraj Bhan 1969, 1975, Suraj Bhan and Shaffer). Such major changes would certainly have affected settlements and migration and this may in part explain a movement into the Doab.

The reconstruction of society from the archaeological evidence suggests simple, small settlements of cultivators and

---

3 One of the finest works of recent scholarship, pointing out not only the importance to historical analyses of the geographical background but of geomorphology as well, has been the monumental study of F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*.

4 The study of the evidence for vegetation from soil samples and other remains at excavated sites.

cattle-raisers to begin with. There is little evidence of any grandiose life-style. Homes are generally wattle and daub huts with rammed earth floors, giving way towards the mid-first millennium B.C. to mud brick structures. Artefacts from inhabited areas indicate that most needs were taken care of in the settlement, and specialized craft production developed slowly. The archaeological evidence, therefore, is a corrective to the more imaginative reconstructions by some modern scholars of life as depicted in the Vedic corpus. Descriptions in the epics of luxury and wealth associated with palaces and flourishing cities could be poetic fantasies or interpolations of a later period.

Attempts have been made to identify some one among these many archaeological cultures with "the Aryans", but such attempts remain hypothetical (Shaffer). It has been suggested that rather than identifying archaeological cultures with the Aryans or the Dravidians and so on, it might perhaps be more feasible to try and correlate them with the major lineages such as the Purus with the PGW and the Yadus with the BRW as listed in the epics and the *Purāṇas*. But even such an identification remains very tentative (Thapar R. 1978a). The *Purāṇas*, composed from the mid-first millennium A.D., refer to two major lineages of *kṣatriyas* or ruling clans. These they call the Sūryavaṃśa or Aikṣvāka, because they trace their descent from Ikṣvāku and Candravaṃśa or Aila who trace their descent from the androgynous Ilā. Thus the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* concerns the former group and the narrative of the *Mahābhārata* revolves around the latter. The segments of the Candravaṃśa are made to fan out geographically over a major part of northern India. Whether all these descent groups were historical is doubtful, but the notion of descent from one of these two ancestral lines was to become popular among royal families in post-Gupta times.

III

When we turn from archaeology to the reconstruction of society from the Vedic corpus we have information on a variety of aspects. The lack of definite dates makes precise generalization difficult. In terms of historical reconstruction

there is a continuity and an evolution in society as described from the *Ṛg Veda* to the later Vedic literature. In a short essay such as this it is not always possible to make a sharp demarcation between the chronology of these texts and some overlap in discussion is inevitable.

The Vedic texts used more frequently in the reconstruction of the history of this period are as follows :[5]

Saṃhitā	Brāhmaṇa	Upaniṣad
Ṛg Veda	Aitareya	Aitareya
	Kauṣītakī	Kauṣītakī
Atharva Veda	Gopatha	Praśna
		Muṇḍaka
Yajur Veda	Śatapatha	Bṛhadāraṇyaka
	Taittirīya	Taittirīya
Sāma Veda	Pañcaviṃśa	Chāndogya
	Jaiminīya	Kena

The geographical distribution of the people referred to in the *Ṛg Veda* covers the *sapta sindhu* region, literally the region of the Indus and its tributaries. This lay in the area from eastern Afghanistan to the Indo-Gangetic watershed and the fringes of the Doab. Attempts have been made to try and define the geography of the Vedic texts on the basis of references to places, peoples, geographical features and dialects (Witzel). This is a difficult exercise as changes in some river courses have been frequent and would have altered boundaries and topographical features over time and would affect attempts to identify people with present-day place names.

Ṛg-Vedic society was pastoral but familiar with agriculture. Wealth is primarily computed in head of cattle as well as horses (regarded as more valuable but less easy to obtain) and chariots, gold and slave girls, as is evident from the *dāna-stuti* hymns in praise of gift-giving (Patel). Cattle being the main wealth, cattle raids were a major form of increasing wealth apart from breeding cattle. This is common to many cattle-keeping societies and comparisons have been made between Vedic pastoralists and the Nuer and Dinka of east Africa

---

5 For a detailed bibliography on Vedic texts, see R. N. Dandekar, *Vedic Bibliography*, a continuation of the earlier one by L. Renou.

(Lincoln). The banks of the Sarasvatī are described as rich in pastures, but possibly with hydrological changes, there was a migration from this area to the watershed and the upper Doab. Pastoralism, it is argued, cannot exist in isolation and requires a relationship with farmers. Such a relationship seems feasible from both the archaeological and the literary evidence and possibly the two groups in northern India at that time spoke different languages. It is interesting that many of the words associated with agriculture in the Vedic texts seem to be non-Aryan (Burrow 1965).

Identity in the Vedic texts was related to *jana* frequently translated as tribe, into which one was born. (Since the word tribe covers a large range of social organizations, some scholars prefer not to use it). Birth was of central importance as the indicator of identity. The *viś* which appears to have been a smaller unit than the *jana* and was possibly a clan, is frequently mentioned. In the hierarchy of clans, that of the *rājā* had the status of the ruling clan. Yet the *rājā* often bore the name of the clan, thus Vasu Caidiya. The term *rājā* has been translated almost automatically as 'king'. This may need reconsideration. Clans and tribes are more often under the control of chiefs and possibly the term *rājā*—the root of which, *raj*, to shine, to stand out (Benveniste 1973)—referred to a chief rather than to a king. Chiefs can have extensive powers without actually being kings. The Vedic *rājā* gradually evolved into a king, an evolution which involved the transformation of the *rājanya* into the *kṣatriya*, a term which has its root in *kṣatra* or power and occurs frequently in later Vedic texts. The *rājā* did not control a concentration of power to the same extent as the *kṣatriya*. The *rājā* was more likely the head of a clan, whereas the term *kṣatriya* introduced the abstract concept of power and gave a further meaning to the clan chief.

Terms such as 'tribe', 'clan', 'lineage', 'descent group', or even 'caste' cannot be used indiscriminately. They have specific meanings which have been discussed at some length by social anthropologists and historians. The terms from Sanskrit and Pāli texts have also to be understood in their contemporary sense. Some of these words changed their meaning over time.

A group of families constituted the *grāma*, the word which came to mean a village. There was also a broader division of society initially into two *varṇas* : the *ārya varṇa* and the *dāsa varṇa* as referred to in the *Ṛg Veda*. Both these words *ārya* and *dāsa* have in the past been interpreted as referring to race as well as to social differentiation. The racial indentification may need correction. Whereas the term *dāsa* did sometimes have an association with physical characteristics, the term *ārya* is generally a reference to someone who is to be respected and does not seem to carry a specific racial meaning. It is even likely that sometimes *ārya* and *dāsa* were used symbolically. The later Vedic texts refer to the more familiar four *varṇas—brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya* and *śūdra.*

The later Vedic texts record further changes in language and society. They cover a wider geographical area which now includes the western Ganga plain and enters into the middle Ganga plain (Witzel). The extension eastwards was along two directions : the foothills of the Himalayas, a route which was later to become famous as the *uttarapatha*, literally, the northern route, and a more southern route following the banks of the Yamuna and Ganga. (Later, the route going south, the *dakṣiṇāpatha*, was to link the Ganga valley with the peninsula.) Both these geographical features, the foothills and the rivers, provided access into the densely forested plain. Familiarity with this wider geographical area meant having to adjust to a variety of new environments. North Bihar is referred to as extensive marshland, and this may have been in part caused by a high water table. The pre-existing settlements in this area can be traced back through excavations to periods as early as the neolithic in some cases, such as at Chirand. The proximity of the Vindhyan outliers in the southern edges of the plain, doubtless provided a background which was partially new and partially similar to that west of the Yamuna on the fringes of the Aravallis. The texts refer to the burial practices of the *asuras* as a mark of differentiation between the *asuras* and the *āryas*, and these practices, it is thought, may refer to the megalithic burials of the Mirzapur region. Other references to the somewhat alien culture of the Vrātyas in Magadha also suggest the presence of diverse cultures in the middle Ganga plain (Chaudhary R. K., Ghose).

The extension of settlement may have been due both to groups branching off and migrating further away from the earliest settlements as well as to some increase in population. There would also have been the merging of earlier settlements with new ones which would have resulted in larger settlement sizes. Early PGW sites are characterized by small settlements fairly closely spaced. If a population increase was associated with migration then it would have had a bearing on delaying the process of state formation. As long as groups can break away, migrate and repeat the form and organization of their parent society in a new area, the tensions within the group are controlled and there is little need to change the ordering of society (Thapar R. 1984). Such tensions would otherwise encourage a movement towards a change such as the concentration of power in the form of a state as a new political organization. Evidence for population size, settlement and migration can come from careful surveys based on the exploration and excavation of archaeological sites. Such evidence is being sought in some recent analyses of the archaeological data (Erdosy).

A comparative study of the early and late Vedic texts suggests a gradual change from pastoralism as the predominant economy to agriculture superceding pastoralism, although the latter never totally declined in the western Ganga plain. The economic pattern varied, however, from area to area. Thus the region around Mathura continued to be substantially pastoral for many centuries, whereas the middle Ganga plain has limited evidence for pastoralism. The change in the economy can be gathered from indirect sources : there are fewer references to cattle in specific contexts and more references to grain in the same contexts. Thus, in the major sacrificial rituals such as the *rājasūya* (Heesterman 1957), the offerings based on dairy produce are less frequent as compared to those which are derived from agricultural products.

Agriculture implies some control over land and forms of irrigation. In north Bihar the description of rice cultivation is that of wet rice. A single crop of rice can be obtained by relying on the seasonal rainfall to provide the necessary water. The marshes of the middle Ganga plain would have had to

be drained and this would have required labour. Wet rice cultivation is also, in itself, labour intensive. If the method of transplantation was employed then this too would have been labour intensive (Sharma R. S. 1983). Such activities would not only necessitate the availability of labour, but also a social distance between those who laboured and those who controlled the labour. This would mean a society where a few were powerful and could order the larger numbers to work for them. The draining of the marshes by digging channels to carry away the surplus water may have in turn suggested irrigation channels or tanks to ensure further crops through the use of artificial irrigation. But even in this case the maintenance of irrigation systems would also have required labour (Thapar R. 1984). Some specialists in agrarian land use have argued that it is not only the nature of cultivation and control over the ecology but also the question of short or long fallow which effect methods of general land control (Boserup). These changes had a bearing on other changes in society.

The origin of caste has generally been traced back to the Vedic sources and the society to which they refer, since the earliest references to *varṇas* come from these texts. The more complex nature of society in the later Vedic texts is in part suggested by the frequency of references to the four *varṇas*. These four—the *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya* and *śūdra*—are not only mentioned, but their various functions are described and their hierarchy established. The definition of an *ārya* required the correct use of Sanskrit and was soon to include the observing of the *varṇāśramadharma*, a caste-based society. Whether *varṇa* divisions invariably coincided with economic status also remains debatable, although the higher the caste the greater the access to economic resources. The concept of *varṇa* as a form of social stratification has also to be seen in the context of other forms of stratification such as *jāti*, which become frequent in the later texts and particularly in non-brahmanical texts. There is a difference of opinion among scholars on the precise social roles of *varṇa* and *jāti*.

Earlier explanations of the origins of caste described it as a form of racial segregation or argued that it was built upon rules of kinship and occupation or saw it as a hierarchical form of ritual office focusing on the king. These views arose

out of efforts at projecting a particular image of India in the nineteenth century (Inden) which emphasized the unchanging character of Indian society.

The concept of the *varṇas* has also been associated with a trifunction in society which is seen as characteristic of societies described in Indo-European sources (Dumezil, 1970, 1971, 1988). Dumezil maintains that fundamental to all Indo-European cultures there exists a tripartite concept of the world and of society. This is expressed among the *ārya* of India and Iran by a division into three categories—priests, warriors and herdsmen-cultivators. This trifunction was said to have eventually given rise to estates and castes. These were the three functions of sovereignty, power and fertility. The question which has been asked and which weakens this theory is whether these themes were specific to Indo-European mythology or could such narratives have had their genesis in other cultures as well (Brough). Further, the tripartite divisions are of such a general nature that they could also be found perhaps in non-Indo-European societies. There is yet another problem, that of what went into the making of Indo-European culture, which is far from clear in the light of recent archaeological debates of complex folk movements and cultural forms in central Asia, west Asia and northwestern India (Gimbutas, Renfrew).

A study of the origin of caste should go beyond the description of the *varṇas* in the Vedic corpus and of Indo-European beginnings. It should involve an investigation of factors relating to environment, kinship patterns, access to economic resources and the role of religious ideology, all of which are significant to the evolving of caste. The roots of the system may go back to societies prior to those described in the Vedic texts and therefore known to us from excavations in northern India. The earlier standard works on caste and its history have therefore to be seen from a fresh perspective.

More recent studies of caste have attempted to present new formulations, particularly viewing caste as an Indian social organization extending over time. Some scholars have emphasized the dimensions of kinship (Karve). This is particularly important in the functioning of *jāti* and continues to be so in later times as well. *Jāti* derives its meaning from the root *jan,*

to be born, and therefore, the patterns of kinship relations are of primary importance to caste organization and these patterns have regional variations. *Jāti* carries an element of the kind of stratification associated with kin-based societies such as pre-state tribes and chiefdoms prior to the class stratification often linked to state societies (Berreman). The hierarchy or the splitting up or the aggregating of such groups may have influenced *jāti* hierarchies. To this would be added control over productive resources as an avenue to rank and power. That the system is described in terms of ritual evaluation does not necessarily mean that it actually had its genesis in religious ritual. To argue that *jātis* emerged from the breaking up of *varnas* (Ghurye, 1969) is perhaps too simplistic. It has been suggested that the two systems, the *varna* seeking ritual legitimation and *jāti* based on kin-relations, were fused (Karve).

A caste consists of people who claim common origins and within the smaller subdivisions of the caste also claim specific patterns of marriage relations. These subdivisions provide a network for marriage and each of these is given a rank in a hierarchy. Marriage patterns revolve around the status of women, among other things, and the continuation of a pattern is also tied to caste. Where occupation and access to resources were bound to caste, these could reflect an economic component of caste. Castes are also closed units, since members of one caste cannot belong to another and membership is by birth. There is also a hierarchy of ranking among castes. This closeness was further expressed in specific castes performing legal and administrative functions in later times and by conforming to specific rituals and religious forms identified with a particular caste. The segmentation of society in this system was one which benefited those who had access to power and resources, but kept the lower castes generally subordinated. There are, however, very occasional references to *śūdras* gaining access to power and resources. The analysis of such situations are of considerable historical interest.

The question of socially upward mobility is another area of study which relates closely to the functioning of caste society and also has a bearing on the close relationship between religion and caste. Many *jātis* or clusters of *jātis* tend to follow

similar religious practices and beliefs and there can be a close identity between a religious sect and a category of *jātis*. Sometimes attempts at upward mobility are expressed by lower castes tending to imitate the way of life and the caste characteristics of the higher castes as and when they can and adopting religious practices similar to those of the upper castes. This process which is more recognisable in later historical periods has been referred to as Sanskritization (Srinivas) and was at first thought to be limited to lesser castes imitating the *brāhmaṇa* castes. Since the *brāhmaṇa* caste is not necessarily the dominant caste in every region and there are imitations of other dominant castes, such as *kṣatriyas* or of traders, the notion has been extended to include the imitation of the life-style of such dominant castes and which over a few generations may change the status of the aspiring caste. Since Sanskritic culture or even the mores of the upper castes are not fixed for all time, as for example, the *brāhmaṇas* are not always vegetarian, it may also be argued that the way of life of the dominant caste also undergoes change and sometimes this is due to interaction with other castes. The history and evolution of caste society is therefore a much more complex study in social relations than was assumed in the past.

Some attempts at explaining the ideological construct of caste, such as that of Dumont, rely largely on brahmanical texts which he and some other Indologists regard as the major expression of Indian civilization. Such a reading, therefore, becomes partisan if not prejudiced, for other points of view are either ignored or set aside as less important. Caste is frequently discussed only in terms of *varṇa*, for this is more common to brahmanical literature; and references to *jāti* are neglected. The emphasis on brahmanical concerns seen as central to the functioning of caste, is an interpretation with which there is disagreement (as for example, Jaiswal). Dumont does not regard brahmanical ideology as an ideological reflection of the existing structure of political and economic power. He argues that brahmanical ideology has been unchanging over time and that ideology encompasses behaviour.

A purely textual search for the origins of caste, would inevitably have to go back to the Vedic texts. But if a more

realistic analysis is made, then the nature of societies as evident from archaeological data would also have to be considered. Furthermore, there are contradictions within the texts, particularly between the early and the late texts. Thus there are references to *brāhmaṇas*, who are described as low or *dāsiputraḥ*. Theoretically the role of the *śūdra* was servitude and the providing of labour. Occasional references to wealthy *śūdras* come from later texts. Concern with *varṇa* seems to be greater in connection with ritual occasions. Possibly the emergence of *varṇa* was linked initially to ritual status. That it was not uniform in its implications is suggested by a later *dharma-sūtra* stating that *varṇadharma* can be modified in accordance with the *dharma* of *kula, jāti* and *deśa*.

The centrality of kinship in caste may have derived from the wider basis of identity in society as described in Vedic texts. *Janas* go back to *Ṛg Vedic* times but there are references in the later texts to larger groups resulting from the coalition and the confederating of individual *janas*, such as the Kurus or the Pañcālas (Shrimali). This may have provided the model for powerful chiefs as reflected in titles such as *ekrāṭ, virāṭ, samrāṭ*. The heightening of power is also associated with the performance of elaborate sacrificial rituals such as the *rājasūya*, the *aśvamedha* and the *vājapeya*. It was through these rituals that the *rājā* claimed affinity and communication with divinity and was imbued with charismatic qualities which differentiated him from the rest of society (Heesterman 1985, Dumont, Drekmeier). The rituals also enhanced the power of the *brāhmaṇas* who were the officiants. The balance between the king and the priest is sometimes regarded as uncertain, although it would appear that it went in favour of the *brāhmaṇas*. These rituals were also believed to encapsulate power and thus encourage the transition to kingship. A reflection of this power is seen in the *janapada*, the territory associated with the *jana*, and named after the ruling *kṣatriya* clan.

The relationship between kingship and power is envisaged differently by some scholars. It is argued that caste re-enacts the royal function at the village level and postulates an opposition between the king and the *brāhmaṇa* (Dumont). Another view is that the king is the mediator between the

ideal of renunciation and the inherent disorder of the mundane world (Heesterman). Such views place more emphasis on ritual and symbolic meaning than on the reality of power, access to resources, social affinities and control over ideology.

The concentration of power was not entirely unidirectional and some of the earlier occasions when the tribe gathered still continued, although some new ones replaced them. There are different opinions as to whether the *rājās* were elected or appointed (Sharma R. S. 1968, Sharma J. P.). There are references to the *vidatha, gana* and *samiti*, which it has been argued had a wider membership than the *sabhā* and *pariṣad* which were perhaps more select. It is significant that the ones with the possibly more limited membership, that is, the latter two, survived into later periods as advisory and ministerial councils.

The power of the *kṣatriya* in relation to the *viś* is also reflected in the gradual distancing between the two where the *viś* provided more of the wherewithal which enabled the *kṣatriya* to build his power. The ability of the *kṣatriya* was based both on his prowess in raids as a result of which wealth was acquired, as well as his ability to conquer territory to enable the establishment of new settlements. This involved the further process of protecting the people so settled. Although warfare was still largely in the nature of raids and skirmishes, nevertheless the mention of a professional, the *senāni*, and of weapons, some involving the use of iron, also show a technological change (Singh S. D.).

In assessing the nature of such early societies, a comparative method of analysis is coming to be used by historians in which the discussions of social anthropologists have played an important role. The method does not consist of applying the pattern of one society to another, but, rather, to the ascertaining of the structure and the system of functioning of one society and then seeing whether the patterns and features of such a society can be used to examine the structure and system of the other. Thus if parallels from anthropology are to be sought in analysing the society described in Vedic sources, there has recently been much useful discussion on a variety of new concepts.

Interest in the functioning of pre-modern societies has, in part, stemmed from the discussion on why capitalism emerged only in some parts of the world. Where economic concerns are seen as central to capitalism, there has been some debate on the centrality of these concerns in non-capitalist societies. It has been suggested that even when such concerns are pre-eminent, they are often embedded in the social structure (Polanyi). Thus economic concerns are significant but not always easily recognizable. Others would argue that it is feasible to identify economic concerns as primary even in the most primitive societies (Krader 1972, 1973, Sahlins 1968). Even if modern economic theory cannot be applied to pre-capitalist societies, these nevertheless have their own economic rationality (Godelier 1977). An enquiry into such economies might require a redefinition of economics and economic activity (Meillassoux). The concept of modes of production has also to be examined in greater detail and one view maintains that each mode may consist of three parts—the economic base, the juridico-political superstructure and the ideological superstructure (Terray, Seddon). Another view suggests that the real differences between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies focus on issues of the nature of dominance, labour and authority (Rey). In early societies there is a domination of kinship relations and politico-religious relations. This includes the organisation of labour, initially kin-based but eventually extending to others. Authority is vested in rank based on birth and descent. Therefore kinship becomes an important feature of such societies.

It has been argued that in the transition from the stateless to state systems a difference between the two kinds of societies is evident. Societies without states are made up of elementary units constituted by descent groups and kinship is fixed by rules of filiation. The descent group can be exogamous. Each descent group is treated as a segment of social organization which involves the relations between the segments and the control of some by others. Power is often asserted on the principle of seniority with segments ordered hierarchically. Power could flow from control over resources, the exchange of women and from sacred forces. Such societies may change and evolve into a state system which introduces many

different features.

Such discussions have inevitably introduced new concepts relating to early societies (Balibar, Seddon, Rey), some of which may have a bearing on the societies described in Indian sources. In some societies kinship is not only central to social organization but it also takes on the control of economic relations. Claims to kinship and ancestry become the spine of social and economic functioning. The notion of property as privately owned develops later. In the early stages land is more often a patrimony than a commodity—it is transmitted by gift or inheritance rather than by exchange or sale. Social relationships attuned to such a situation would inevitably be different from those of a later period. Although the societies discussed in this anthropological literature are largely African and American Indian and are not therefore the same in time and place as those described in Indian texts, nevertheless the discussion introduces a range of valuable ideas which could enrich our understanding of many facets of early societies in India. Such concepts can be a useful starting point in exploring the nature of past societies.

Societies described in early sources have also been compared to chiefdoms, some of which eventually evolved into states ruled by kings. The distinction between the early *rājā* and *rājanya* and the later *kṣatriya* and *rājā* are distinctions which can be seen less in the terms used and more in their context. Chiefdoms although distinct from kingdoms are not altogether dissimilar since some facets from the first develop more fully in the second. Tribute is collected but not in the form of a regular system of tax as in states. Religious and political authority functions through more effective control over people rather than mainly over resources which had been regarded as belonging not to individuals but to a descent group, that is, those who trace connections through kinship. The legitimation of power is also intensified.

IV

The *kṣatriya* remained the nucleus of a community which was constituted both of kin groups as well as of non-kin groups such as the priests, craft specialists and of others who

provided the labour. References to specialists are evident in the twelve *ratnins* who acted as a kind of support for the power of the *kṣatriyas*. Professions which were later to be accorded a low status such as that of the carpenter and the bard are at this time given a high status, an indication that professional status did change over time.

The use of particular categories of labour is related to the nature of the economy. If the *varṇas* were in effect proto-classes or even classes then the *viś* provided the income and the *śūdras* the bulk of the labour. Production was the responsibility of the *viś*. It is likely that in the earlier stage the primary labour would have been that of the family, supplemented by lesser members of the lineage [6] and where control over labour would be exercised through lineage connections. With gradual social and economic change and a greater demand for labour, non-kin and non-lineage labour—which would include *śūdras* and *dāsas*—would be inducted into production (Thapar R. 1984). Access to this latter category would increase with the decrease in clan labour, but those in control would remain the ones with the maximum access to non-kin labour. References, not only to *śūdras* being subservient but also to the use of *dāsas* or slaves suggests that sometimes there was indeed an extended access to non-kin labour. Access to such labour made it possible for the economic process to move towards some members of society controlling a surplus and references to the *kṣatriyas* and their *kośas* (treasuries, of goods in kind at this stage), would be a pointer. However, there were other processes which were inimical to the accumulation of a surplus.

There was no system of the regular collection of taxes to begin with, but views differ on the nuances between prestation and taxes (Sharma R. S. 1983, Thapar R. 1984). In later times three terms are commonly used for taxes—*bali*, *bhāga* and *śulka*. All three terms are referred to in Vedic texts, but perhaps not as taxes. There were varieties of prestations or offerings made at the time of the harvest or on the occasion of a sacrificial ritual or else these were a division of the

---

6 Lineage is here being used in its literal meaning—claiming descent from a common ancestor and thereby seen as connected.

produce, the division generally being linked to a ritual occasion. The connotation of words can change over time and these words later came to be used for various taxes. As prestations, *bali* and *bhāga* were based on personal relations between the giver and the receiver and were made in kind. The amount would vary according to the occasion and the relationship between those involved in the transaction. The implicit relationship between the two was that the recipient protected the one who made the gift. Taxation is qualitatively different and requires three processes : the measurement and assessment of the produce to be taxed and the fixing of the percentage or amount to be collected; a regular period for the collection of the tax; and a recognized functionary who collects the tax on behalf of the taxing authority, thus making the collection (in theory), a relatively impersonal act. These three factors came to be recognized only with the establishment of a state system. In their absence the accumulation of the *kṣatriya*, although evident, tended to be somewhat haphazard.

A further barrier to accumulation was the ritual of sacrifice, the *yajña*, and particularly the more elaborate *yajñas* which ensured the greater power and status of the *rājā*. The ritual created the link between the *rājā* and the *brāhmaṇa*. It was supposed to ensure the success of the *rājā* in his enterprises and the wealth acquired by him through these enterprises, such as cattle raids and skirmishes, was exchanged, displayed and the rest often consumed through the performance of the ritual (Thapar R. 1984). The *dāna-stuti* hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* make the relationship clear. The priestly bard immortalizes the *rājā*, generally on a ritual occasion, by composing a *praśasti* and receiving wealth in return from the *rājā* (Thapar R. 1978a). As the rituals became more elaborate, the gifts bestowed by the *rājā* on the priests also became more extensive. This was a form of exchange and in the course of the ritual, wealth was also displayed and consumed by the burning of vast quantities of *ghī* and other pastoral products and by the offerings of livestock and grain. The *rājā*, after the performance of a major sacrifice, was probably left with a depleted store. This has sometimes been compared to the potlatch associated with the American Indians of the northern Pacific Coast, in which wealth is given away or destroyed in order to acquire or

maintain social status.

What was important to the *kṣatriya* was not the lack of accumulation of wealth but the fact that his status among other assembled chiefs had been upheld and that he had, through the intervention of priests, propitiated the deities. Thus the loss of accumulated wealth had ample compensations. This prestation economy, however, prevented the large-scale accumulation of wealth by a few, a situation which was to change after the mid-first millennium B. C.

Such rituals also involved another aspect which again had religious, social and economic features. This was the gift-exchange encouraged after the *yajña* when the chief/king gave gifts to priests in the form of *dāna* and also provided a sacrificial fee, the *dakṣiṇā*. These were generally tangible items. In return for this the *yajamāna*, the patron of the sacrifice, acquired prestige and status as well as what was claimed to be the benediction of the deities. This set up a nexus between political and religious authority, where one element conditioning the nexus was economic wealth. *Dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* as elements of gift-exchange continued to play a role in a variety of religious sects even in later times (Thapar R. 1978a, Nath).

Access to divinity and mystical power through ritual and *mantra* was claimed in the commentaries on the ritual texts as for example, in the *Brāhmaṇas*, where a rich mythology was elaborated upon. It should however be kept in mind that apart from its other functions, mythology is also a means of encouraging acculturation between diverse social and cultural groups. We know from archaeology that there were many cultures co-existing at the time and, inevitably, the extensive mythology of the Vedic texts would reflect this admixture. This was to become a mechanism of cultural assimilation in many periods and regions of the Indian subcontinent (Kosambi 1962).

The significance of ritual related to many other forms of knowledge, some of which have been studied in depth. There is also evidence of what might be called proto-scientific knowledge in the way in which the sacrificial area was demarcated or the altar constructed and in the anatomical information available from the cutting up of the animal as part of the ritual (Staal 1983, Chattopadhyaya D. P. 1986). Equally

important was the reciting and memorization of Vedic *mantras* which contributed to the understanding of the phonetics of the language, to meaning and ultimately to grammar. The correct memorization of texts was an absolute necessity and required complicated mnemonic devices, used to this day. There is a debate, however, on whether these devices were prior to the use of a script or were dependent on the existence of literacy, where the latter was used as an aid to memorization (Staal 1989, Cardona, Renou, Ong). The *ārya* had to know the correct pronunciation and grammar of Sanskrit, for a faulty use of language would reduce the speaker to being regarded as a *mleccha*—one who is beyond the social pale, a term often associated at this time with the eastern areas (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 3.2.1.23).

The first grammar of Sanskrit, that of Pāṇini, dates to about the fifth century B.C. The earliest evidence of a script dates to the Aśokan edicts of the third century B.C. Literacy would also point to a number of other changes in society, some relating to the economy and some to modes of thought. It has been argued that the focus on rationality and logic in early thought is linked to literacy (Lloyd). That there was a shift in the mode of thought from the Vedic to the Buddhist with the *Upaniṣads* providing a kind of bridge has been suggested in various studies of knowledge and perception in Indian philosophy (Jayatilake, Matilal).

V

There is evidence of the wider use of literacy from the Buddhist texts or the Buddhist Canon, which in written form dated to the period subsequent to the Buddha. Some scholars differentiate between the *Nikāyas*, said to belong to an early part of the Canon, and the *Jātakas* which, even if early in origin, appear to have been added to until the Christian era. Some of the Canon was part of the oral tradition and some was added later when it was preserved in a written form. The problem of chronology with regard to these texts is twofold. One is the recent debate on the date of the Buddha being possibly a century or so later than the usually accepted date (Bechert 1991), and secondly the question of dating the texts.

It is generally assumed that some portions recorded an oral tradition contemporary with the Buddha, others were recorded after he died and yet other sections are later (Lamotte). Attempts have been made to try and provide a stratification of these texts (Pande). If the date of the Buddha is later than the one now accepted, then some of the texts would become contemporary with the Mauryan period which raises other problems. Earlier studies on Indian Buddhism have commented on these questions (Nakamura, Lamotte), although the discussion on the date of the Buddha has been revived recently (Bechert 1991).

The use of Jaina sources for this period is more restricted as some texts such as the *Ācārangasūtra* have been dated to an early period, possibly to the third century B. C., but the compilation of the Jaina Canon is generally dated to the early centuries A. D. This makes it much more possible for there to have been interpolations and editing.

The archaeological data of this period in the middle Ganga valley moves from neolithic cultures of the second millennium B. C. as at Chirand (Sinha B. P. and Verma), to the BRW sites which as cultures were precursors to the NBP (Sinha K. K., Srivastava 1979b). Buddhist texts provide more extensive evidence of settlements along the foothills of the Himalaya and into the middle Ganga plain. There are references to the *gana-sanghas* or the *gana-rājyas* along the Himalayan terai such as the single clans of the Śākyas, Mallas and Koliyas and southwards to the confederacy of clans as at Vaiśāli which included the Licchavis among the eight confederate clans (Jha H. N.). It has been suggested that iron technology may have assisted in clearing the heavy monsoon forests and making land available for the cultivation of wet rice which became the major agricultural enterprise in the middle Ganga plain (Kosambi 1956, Sharma R. S. 1983, Thapar R. 1984). A later Buddhist text, the *Kunāla Jātaka*, when referring back to this period does make a distinction between the *rāja-kula*, the ruling clan which owned the land and had *kṣatriya* status, and the *dāsa-kammakaras*, the slaves and hired labourers who worked the land.

The *gana-sanghas* have in the past been referred to as democracies. However the fact that political and economic

control was confined to the *rāja-kula* clan alone would suggest that it would be more correct to refer to them as oligarchies or even chiefdoms. The notion that these were democracies is incorrect since there was no political representation of those who were not members of the *rāja-kula*. In the past historians have drawn a parallel between these and the government of the city of Athens which has been described as the earliest democracy. But even Athens cannot be called a democracy in the absolute sense for there was a sharp distinction between free citizens and slaves; although the slaves formed the majority of the population they had no political or legal rights nor were they represented in any of the assemblies. The historical dimensions of slavery in the Graeco-Roman world have also been re-interpreted by recent scholars and the concept of slavery is now seen as far more complex than it was earlier believed to be (Finley, Garlan, de Ste. Croix).

References are made to a number of *janapadas*, of which sixteen are said to be the more important. Of these, Gandhāra, Kośala, Magadha and Āvanti are frequently mentioned. A common feature of the *janapadas* is the reference to at least one town which is the capital. The beginnings of urban life mark a major social change in any society. Whether urban centres can be associated with societies of the earlier part of the first millennium B.C. in India remains unlikely, and arguments hinge on the definition of urban centres. Archaeological evidence for urbanization has been dated to around the mid-first millennium B.C. associated with the later phase of NBP levels at various sites in the Ganga plain. However, in the absence of horizontal excavations it is difficult to reconstruct the process of evolution towards urbanism. Power was in the hands of the ruling clan and the extended family associated with it would tend to live in places, which did eventually develop into urban centres such as Hastināpur, Kauśāmbi and Āhicchatra. These would initially have been the nuclei of administration. If, however, commerce and trade are a requirement of urbanism, then recognized urban centres can only date to a somewhat later period.

The evolution of urban societies has been the source of much discussion. Archaeologists have suggested the study of the hierarchies of size and function in settlements in those

areas, where urbanism develops, arguing that urban centres have to be seen in relation to other settlements. If a city is defined as a concentration of people, the majority of whom do not produce their own food (Sjoberg), then the production of an agricultural surplus becomes a necessity prior to urbanization. If the city is essentially an administrative centre it requires a political context to support such administration. It has also been argued that cities grow out of ceremonial centres where a religious nucleus provides the reason for the concentration of people (Wheatley). But equally significant is the notion that a city is essentially a place of exchange and the exchange includes items and ideas (Redfield and Singer). The exchange may be fairly simple to begin with, as in the nexus between small and large villages or the production of particular items in craft villages.

There are textual references to villages of craftsmen, such as carpenters and potters. Exchange in this context would be limited to essential goods. Luxury items tended to be exchanged as gifts among royal clans. Thus when Bharata, the brother of Rāma, visits his maternal relations—the Kekeyas in the Punjab—he takes with him a large number of gifts and, significantly, brings back horses. The latter although common to northwestern India were less easily available in the region of Kośala. Circuits of exchange develop from circuits of pastoral groups or from the existing networks involving essential items such as trade in salt and iron smithy, which were often serviced through a regular seasonal circuit by those who worked them. Exchange is further encouraged if settlements are located on the banks of navigable rivers and are therefore within easy reach of each other by boat, or are located in other accessible areas. Such activities would have formed the prelude to the emergence of trade in the Ganga plain.

Attempts have been made recently to examine links between sites of varying sizes which give some indication of the settlement pattern (Lal M. 1984). This can provide clues as to why and how a particular place developed into an urban centre. Thus the eventual urban function of Kauśāmbi has been examined through the hierarchy of sites surrounding it (Erdosy). This has required some attempt at calculating the

size of settlements and noting changes in size as well as trying to correlate these to estimated population figures. Such attempts, which are by no means final, are an improvement on the purely speculative estimates of population size. They also help to focus on the actual situation in terms of numbers involved and the kind of concentrations of population which went into the making of these settlements. The growth and change in these settlements is one way of ascertaining possible movements towards urbanization. Size would have been one of the features distinguishing settlements in the differentiation suggested in the grammar of Pāṇini, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, which refers to *pura*, and *nagara* in the course of quoting grammatical rules.

Archaeological evidence such as the early wall around the settlement which could become a fortification wall, the use of mud-brick for structures, evidence of artisanal activity, the presence of punch-marked coins and of products which were exchanged over a larger area such as the NBPW at some sites, suggests that these were the nuclei of towns dating to the mid-first millennium B.C. (Ghosh A. 1973, Joshi M. C., Thakur). Where urban centres developed commercial interests, they were often located on the banks of one of the rivers of the Ganga system so that the rivers could be used as channels of transport and communication, or else on regularly used routes. In some cases the locations of capitals were shifted in order to tap commerce, as for example, the shift from Rājagṛha to Pāṭaliputra.

The rise of urban centres is not unrelated to further changes in the agrarian scene. Apart from the *gaṇa-saṅghas*, in other cases there had been a gradual breaking up of the clan-holding of land and the emergence of family and individual holdings. This may have developed from families claiming rights of usage which over time were accepted as rights of ownership. The significance of this change is evident particularly from Buddhist texts, where the *gṛhapati/gahapati* assumes an important position as the head of the household and sometimes the owner of cultivable land (Wagle, Chakravarty U.). A distinction is made between the *gahapati* who appears to be the well-off land-owner and the *kassaka* who is the cultivator. In wealthy families there are references to slaves,

more frequently in the context of household or domestic work, but also labouring in the fields (Chanana). In the use of the compound, the word *dāsa-kammakara* in the Pāli texts, makes it difficult to ascertain whether slaves were used for production in larger numbers than hired labour.

The *gahapati* and the *kassaka* are also the groups involved in the payment of regular taxes. Such dues from peasants can be a form of rent paid to those who own the land, or, where the cultivator owns the land, in the form of tax to the state. In either case the existence of the state is assumed. It has been argued that the economy of the peasant is based on family labour and production is for self-consumption. The category of rich peasants, however, would use non-kin labour and produce for exchange. In either case, the essential characteristic of peasant society lies in the concern with production rather than with kinship (Shanin, Wolf). It, therefore, differs from the earlier society with its absence of rent or tax.

The commonly referred to taxes, such as *bali* and *bhāga* are no longer prestations or offerings, but are regular amounts, the *bhāga* generally computed at one-sixth of the produce; they are collected by the king's officers and are collected at a contracted time. The tax of one-sixth is in theory so well established that the king is sometimes referred to as the *saḍbhāgin*. Oppressive rules were equated with severe taxation. Such conditions, it is said, encouraged peasants to migrate and this was used as a threat against oppressive taxation.

Taxation implied a change in the function of agrarian surplus. Whereas previously, in what may be described as a prestation economy, where gifts were voluntarily made on ritual and other occasions, there was a tendency to consume or destroy the surplus, now the concern was with conserving it, in order to use it for taxes as well as to accumulate it for personal gain. The possibility of accumulation becomes a reality in the emergence of wealthy *gahapatis* who employ labour and slaves to work the land. The computation of wealth in cattle, characteristic of the *Ṛg Veda*, had given way to the symbol of the self-replenishing granary. It was probably from among the families of the wealthy land-owning *gahapatis* that there emerged, the initially part-time and ultimately full-time, profession of traders and merchants as well as of

bankers and financiers, referred to as *setthis* (Fiser).

Both the tax-paying peasant and the trader were new socio-economic categories and although they would technically be included in the *vaiśya* and *śūdra varṇas*, the Buddhist texts make it clear that the rich landowner and the merchant had a high social status. The word *sresṭhin* ('of the best'), from which *setthi* is derived, has a different connotation in the Vedic texts and the high status of the *setthi* as a financier was unacceptable to brahmanical thought which remained suspicious of city life and of the professional activities of the *setthis*, such as usury. The emergence of the *setthis* was not the result of accumulation alone. It was also tied into changes in the nature of exchange and trade.

Long distance trade would also have contributed to these changes. Towns such as Taxila and Ujjain provided both manufactured items and markets. The use of coinage was tied to this long distance trade, given the quantity of coins associated with such sites (Dhavalikar, Cribb, Ray S. C.). A glance westwards indicates flourishing markets under both Assyrian and Achaemenid control. In the sixth century B. C. the trans-Indus region was part of the Achaemenid Empire and a town such as Taxila would have been a major funnel for trade with west Asia. The west Asian Aramaic script was introduced to northern India leading to the evolution of *kharosṭhi* for the writing of Prākrit in northwestern India during the Mauryan period. Another innovation was the extensive use of punch-marked coins (Narain and Gopal, Narain 1966, Mitchener).

The introduction of coined metallic money marks a major change in urban life. It extends the geographical reach of trade and brings distant centres into contact. The exchange is not only of goods but also of ideas. Thus those interested in the profession of medicine, we are told, travel from the Ganga plain to Taxila for training. Long distance trade is assisted by the use of a script which makes it possible to use letters of credit and promissory notes so that traders do not have to physically travel to far away places. In many cultures the evolution of a script coincides with trade and this appears to have been the case with *kharosṭhi* and *brāhmī*, although some maintain that *brāhmī* owes its genesis to the administrative

needs of the Mauryan Empire (Goyal). The use of money also permits forward speculation and money itself can be invested at interest. Thus the profession of financiers becomes central to high-value trade and it is thought that the *seṭṭhi* was to become essentially a financier (Fiser). The computation of wealth in money provides an additional avenue to status. No matter how contemptuous the brahmanical texts may have been about traders, there is no doubt that traders had a high status where Buddhism and Jainism were the prevalent ideologies and clearly were respected in many parts of northern India.

Another feature of urbanism was the emergence of a large number of new professions catering to urban needs. Commerce involved the buying and selling of products and with a greater demand for products there tended to be a concentration of artisans in the towns. Specialization led to proficiency and skill in the crafts. It also encouraged artisans working on a particular craft to live in the same part of the town, which facilitated the obtaining of raw materials or selling the finished product to merchants. It may also have developed out of caste considerations where occupational groups congregated; although it could equally well be argued that because of this congregation, some occupational groups came to be identified as separate castes. This tended to become a characteristic of Indian urban life even in later periods, when commerce was carried out in Indian cities in specialized markets rather than in a large open market, central to the town.

Buddhist texts refer more frequently to *jāti* than to the four *varṇas*, particularly when compared to the *sūtra* literature of the *brāhmaṇas*. In the latter, social functioning is, in theory, conditioned by *varṇa* status, as is evident from the *Dharma-sūtras*, *Gṛhya-sūtras* and *Śrauta-sūtras* (Banerji S. C., Lingat). Rules of marriage, rights to property and inheritance are conditioned by caste, as are also certain aspects of civic functioning such as legal punishments—the higher castes generally receiving a lighter punishment for the same crime as compared to the lower castes. The degree to which the *Dharma-sūtras* reflect actual practices or are normative texts is debatable (Kane, Derrett 1978). Nevertheless attitudes towards

the lower castes are contemptuous in these texts. Information on kinship patterns has been discussed in some detail (Trautmann 1974, 1981) as well as on the origins and evolution of the lower castes (Sharma R. S. 1980) and untouchables (Jha V. N.). The theory of mixed castes has also come under scrutiny with an attempt to explain it by examining the evidence for actual social conditions. Possibly the theory was invented to maintain the low status of certain castes. Most of these were professions which required labour or were groups regarded as socially backward. Buddhist theory also rated such groups as low. The low status of the *śūdra* was underlined in brahmanical texts by the explanation that each category within this *varṇa* emerged from a mixed caste marriage, which union is then specifically listed, unlike the higher castes, which descend from origins conducive to status (Thapar R. 1984).

Buddhist texts refer more frequently to *jāti*, especially in relation to marriage, kinship and birth. The ratings of *jātis* on the social scale were different from brahmanical texts as the higher *jātis* are often listed as *khattiya/kṣatriyas*, *brāhmaṇs* and *gahapatis* where there appears to be a greater consideration for economic status and access to resources, than merely the ritual status of the *varṇa* (Wagle). However, although members of the lower castes were welcome to the monastic orders, there are initially fewer persons from this strata associated with the Buddhist *saṅgha* (Chakravarti U.). The stories of the *Jātaka* literature often allude to and include the lower strata. But interestingly this is also the literature in which the *caṇḍālas* are depicted as untouchables.

In contrast to the Vedic texts it is evident from other sources of this time that society in the Ganga plain had undergone major changes and was far more complex than before. There was a distribution of diverse cultural groups and a range of social hierarchies and economic functions. In such a situation there was a need for an overall control. This took the form of the emergence of states. The *rājā* as chief finally evolved into the *rājā* as king in those *janapadas* where monarchy became the norm. Among these, Kośala and Magadha were initially important. The establishment of monarchy, however, was only one part of a larger change which involved the coming of the state, although in the

myths relating to the origin of kingship, the establishment of kingship is crucial. Both in the *matsyānyāya* story from the *Mahābhārata* (Śānti Parvan 67.16, cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.1.6.24.) and the *mahāsammata* story from the *Dīgha Nikāya* (3.80-98), social chaos requires a person to control society through the maintenance of law and order and to protect it from aggression. In the brahmanical version the gods appoint a king and in the Buddhist version he is elected by the people and this difference is significant. In both cases there is some contractual element and he is permitted to collect taxes as a wage for maintaining law and order. The important elements therefore are the agent, the source of legitimacy, the right to coercion and the financial wherewithal (Thapar R. 1984). These elements are reflected in the later theory of the constituents of the state, the *sapta prakṛti* or the *saptāṅga* theory, where they are listed as the king, the minister or non-kin functionaries, the treasury, coercive authority, the capital, the territory and the ally.

One source of legitimacy which is not mentioned in the seven constituents but remains important is that which involves relations between the king and those claiming to represent the sacred authority of the many religious ideologies of the time. This took various forms. One was that of the king performing major *yajñas* and the claim by those who performed the rituals as well as the belief of the king that through the *yajña*, the gods conferred their approval on the king. In other religious systems such as the Buddhist and the Jaina, the king became a patron of the *saṅgha* by making a donation to it. The *saṅgha*, in return, as the institution embodying the authority of the religious groups, expressed its approval of the king. Royal links with the new religious ideologies, particularly Buddhism, develop more fully in the Mauryan period. Rulers such as Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha are said to have been interested in these religions, but were not major patrons. What is perhaps more interesting is that the early rulers of Magadha are not frequently associated with Vedic sacrificial rituals, even though Magadha was to emerge as the most powerful of the states.

It has been argued that the new religions with their concern for the salvation of the individual, and Buddhism in particular,

were attractive to the *khattiyas* and the traders. The *khattiyas* having lost political power turned to these religions for consolation (Weber). But it would be valid to look a little further back and ask why the *kṣatriyas* were also involved in formulating the new ideas of Upaniṣadic philosophy. Possibly one reason, among others, for questioning the efficacy of the *yajña* may have been the destruction of wealth at the *yajñas*. Therefore, in order to conserve wealth, *dhyāna* or meditation and *yoga* were accepted as alternative paths to *mokṣa* (Thapar R. 1993). Major changes in religious belief and practice, when supported by social groups, do have social underpinnings which historians should observe. *Kṣatriya* support of Buddhism (in the context of the *gaṇa-saṅghas*) may also have had to do, among other things, with the Buddhist legitimation of accumulating and investing wealth. That this was central to the emergence and continuation of the traders and commercial groups is of course evident and it has been suggested that a substantial patronage to Buddhism in its early history was based on support from commercial groups (Kosambi 1956, 1965).

The urban background to what would be regarded as heretical or dissident views from the brahmanical perspective, is very evident from the references to the teaching of such groups and the places where they taught. This was frequently in the parks on the outskirts of towns. This may well have been one reason why brahmanical texts disapprove of the good *snātaka* going to the city. The dominance of non-brahmanical views, in the middle Ganga plain, does raise the question of whether in this area, these can be referred to as heterodox ideas.

VI

It was also in this area that Magadha under Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru became dominant among the newly emerging states. Many reasons have been put forward for this development: the military strength of Magadha, the closeness of iron deposits in south Bihar (although archaeological surveys of this area remain inadequate); the proximity of forests in the Rajmahal Hills providing both timber and

elephants; the fertility and productivity of the soil, and, that Magadha lay on a nodal point of the Ganga river system, providing communication with many parts of the Ganga plain (Kosambi 1965). Magadha under the Nandas controlled virtually the entire plain. This was to be the basis of yet further territorial aggrandizement under the Mauryas.

The significance of other states is suggested by different evidence. The widespread discovery of punch-marked coins associated with Ujjain points to its commercial importance. This was in part due to the opening up of routes from the north to the peninsula, in particular to what was referred to as the *dakṣiṇāpatha*, the route to the south. Ujjain was to remain an important point on this route. The route was not only a channel of communication between north and south but also the vanguard of the exploration of the peninsula by the states of the north, intensified under the Mauryas. From the Vindhyas southwards, the peninsula had a distribution of megalithic sites (Gururaja Rao, Sundara), whose occupants had not only exploited local resources but had also been part of a network of distribution and exchange based on these resources. The importance of Ujjain was also tied to links between Malwa and the west coast, especially the ports in the Gulf of Cambay such as Bhṛghukaccha/Broach. Recent excavations along the Arabian Gulf and from Oman to Yemen point to activities linking western India and west Asia in earlier periods. Given this close association with the Gulf trade, the west coast of India could well have participated in the continuing trade involving both the Assyrians and the Achaemenids.

Achaemenid power, with its base in Iran, dominated the area from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indus, an area which was later to see the rise of a number of Hellenistic kingdoms (Kuhrt, Burstein). These kingdoms had many features which can be traced back to the Achaemenid system. A diverse range of sources are now being used to reconstruct the social and economic history of ancient Iran in the first millennium B.C. (Dandamaev and Lukonin). The trans-Indus area was conquered by the Achaemenids in the sixth century B.C. and this brought northwestern India into close contact with west Asia (Chattopadhyaya S.). Curiosity about India

grew in the west Asian and Mediterranean world. This is evident from the gradual but noticeable change in accounts referring to India, which move from the magical and fanciful descriptions of earlier writers such as Ktesias, to the more realistic accounts of later times by those who accompanied Alexander during his campaign in northern India (Karttunen).

Alexander's interest in India was marginal to his ambition to conquer west Asia (Lane Fox, Bosworth). But having crossed the Indus and campaigned with success in the Punjab, he went as far as his army would go and stopped at the watershed which acted as a frontier. It is possible that the estimated strength of the Nanda army disheartened his soldiers. Alexander himself was also interested in the geography of the region and wished to reach what he believed were the shores of the ocean, which, it was thought, covered the other side of the earth. However he had to return instead to Babylon where he died soon after. Alexander's successors carved out kingdoms for themselves in west Asia and wherever Alexander had annexed territory. These kingdoms came to be known as Hellenistic, for they were not Greek but ruled by those who were of Greek origin and whose cultural ways had, over the decades, imbibed much of the local culture, though outwardly maintaining Hellenic or Greek forms. Of the Hellenistic dynasties, the Seleucids in Iran, Antiochus in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt had the closest contacts with India during the Mauryan period.

VII

The Mauryan period is characterized by the availability of a large range of sources and therefore a great deal has already been written on it. There is little that is startlingly new in terms of the discovery of fresh sources except for some further versions of the inscriptions of Aśoka (Sircar). Archaeological evidence, largely from Mauryan levels in vertical excavations, provides some data on material conditions. There is, however, a great paucity of archaeological data from excavations, as, once again, horizontal excavations of sites known to have been inhabited in Mauryan times have not been undertaken except at Taxila. Since archaeology now remains the only major new

source of information about these times, it is important that there be more excavations. Given the richness of the literary data, further excavations of Mauryan levels would be an excellent method of comparing and complementing the sources. The historian can only wait until such new evidence is available and hope that the wait will not be for too long. Consequently, in the absence of major new evidence, studies of the Mauryan period have involved interpreting the existing data afresh.

Of the early rulers, the legends associating Cānakya or Kauṭilya with Candragupta Maurya have been sifted and an attempt has also been made to date the text of the *Arthaśāstra*, using the method of stylistic analyses with the aid of a computer (Trautmann 1971). The result indicates various periods of composition for different sections and the probability that the text as we have it now was compiled in the third century A.D. A fresh study and translation of the *Arthaśāstra* has vastly improved upon earlier ones (Kangle).

The terms of the treaty between Seleucus Nicator and Candragupta Maurya mention the ceding of Seleucid territory in Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the Makran to the Mauryas, a statement which is supported by recently discovered Greek and Aramaic versions of inscriptions of Aśoka at Kandahar (Schlumberger and Benveniste 1964, Norman). Their importance also lies in the fact that they provide us with Greek renderings of significant concepts in the Aśokan inscriptions, such as *dhamma*, which clarifies our understanding of the term. It is interesting that even in the Greek version, no mention is made specifically of the teachings of the Buddha and instead the term used is *eusebeia* or 'sacred duty' and therefore carries the more general connotation of the word *dhamma* (Thapar R. 1988).

According to the same treaty Candragupta gave Seleucus five hundred elephants. This was an important clause for the Seleucids. The Hellenistic kings believed that an elephant wing was crucial to the success of an army and since they were constantly at war, the availability of elephants was regarded as necessary to gaining a military edge over enemies (Scullard). The Ptolemies were also anxious to obtain elephants and tried to tap sources in east Africa, continuing the earlier

Egyptian links along the Red Sea. Possibly they may have ventured to follow a maritime route to India in the hope of obtaining elephants and other products. Both the Seleucids and the Ptolemies sent envoys to the Mauryas.

Mauryan chronology has been reviewed with an attempt to focus on the date of 269-268 B.C. for Aśoka (Eggermont). The history and chronology of the successors of Aśoka remains an enigma. New studies of the Aśokan inscriptions include a collated version of the epigraphs as known until 1950 (Bloch J.). Discussions on various other inscriptions since discovered (Sircar) provides a convenient appendix to editions of the earlier · inscriptions. Palaeographical studies treat of the Mauryan script in both a detailed and specific way (Upasaka) as well as more generally (Dani).

The standard edition of the quotations from classical writers on India, especially Megasthenes, remains that of McCrindle, but a new translation is now long overdue, given that during the last hundred years since McCrindle's translation there has been a large amount of new knowledge on both the Hellenistic and Indian worlds. A new edition of the *Aśokāvadāna* (Mukhopadhya) has also led to a further study of the legend (Strong, De Jong 1987). A different category of sources, namely, the punch-marked coins have been carefully studied with some interesting although not entirely acceptable results. The collection of papers pertaining to this study has included an attempt to weigh the coins from a single hoard, to measure wear and tear and to use this as one of the arguments for a chronological reconstruction of the coins (Kosambi 1981).

The nature of Mauryan political control has been re-examined and is subject to some reinterpretation. The earlier notion of a highly centralized, uniform system of administration, extending to every part of the empire is being reconsidered. The reconsideration stems both from theoretical views supporting a more decentralized type of state as well as from the practical problems of administering such a large area. The administration may have been centralized in intent but was probably less so in practice. The precise extent of the Mauryan Empire is not ascertainable and generally the location of Mauryan inscriptions provide a clue to areas under

Mauryan control. But the degree of control over certain areas has been questioned (Bongard-Levin). This is also based on a consideration of distances between the capital and various parts of the empire, the routes used and their viability and the efficiency with which orders could be conveyed and carried out (Fussman). A detailed discussion of roads and communications would suggest a more problematic situation than has been generally assumed. Political centralization or decentralization also involves the question of why an administration needed to control particular areas and the spatial extent of the control.

More specifically it has been argued that the nature of political control relates to the basic question of the definition of the term 'empire' (Thapar R. 1988). A suggested definition refers to three categories of control. The first is that of direct administration over the area which forms the nucleus of the empire, in this case the region of Magadha, which has been called the metropolitan state. The administration of such an area would be strongly centralized and uniform within the metropolitan state, in fact would agree broadly with the description of Mauryan administration as given by Megasthenes and with the principles of the Arthaśāstra. The second would refer to economically developed areas which were conquered and governed through representatives with a back-up administration similar to, but not identical with, that of the metropolitan area. These constituted core areas providing revenue, and were either earlier states now absorbed into the empire such as Gandhāra and Āvanti or else were areas which, on the decline of the empire, could move towards state formation such as Kalinga. The third category is that of peripheral areas, where imperial control may have been limited to the routes traversing the area and to the actual source of raw materials and resources. Examples of this would be the peninsula and particularly the gold bearing regions of Karnataka, where the Mauryan presence is very evident from the distribution of Aśokan inscriptions, but it is unlikely that the entire region came under direct Mauryan administrative control.

Mauryan control over the peninsula needs to be enquired into in more detail. Excavations carried out so far at sites close

to the location of Aśokan inscriptions, do not provide significant evidence of a Mauryan presence. Aśokan inscriptions tend to cluster in Karnataka. The archaeological sites are largely those of megalithic burials and settlements, suggesting that there was a pre-existing pattern of habitation and exchange into which the Mauryas may have intruded. The excavation of habitation mounds in the area may provide useful information of such an interaction. The local language is likely to have been Tamil or one of Dravidian origin, yet the Aśokan inscriptions are in Prākrit. Tamil *brāhmī* developed in the period after Aśoka and appears to have been an adaptation of the Aśokan *brāhmī* script to the Tamil language. Clearly no effort was made by Aśoka to use the local language as in the case of the Greek and Aramaic speaking areas. Possibly this was because of the absence of a local script in the area.

This raises the question of the nature and quality of the contact between the Mauryan administration and the local people in the peninsula. Mauryan control seems to have been greater in those areas where they were tapping resources, as for example, gold, and hence the cluster of inscriptions. Possibly other resources were obtained through local agencies, such as the people inhabiting the megalithic sites, and their way of life remained substantially unchanged by the Mauryan presence. The contents of the Aśokan inscriptions, which must have been read out and translated by the officers to the local people, indicate a conciliatory policy and an attempt to use the method of persuasion through *dhamma* to effect a control over the populace. Interestingly the most recent inscriptions, found at Sannathi in Gulbarga district, include portions of the Separate Edict, so far found only in Kalinga (Ramesh). In contrast to this the Sangam literature describes the Mauryas as conquerors who swept through the land (Narayanan).

Analyses of these kinds raise the broader issue of the definition of an empire where territorial extent is not the only criterion, but economic exploitation plays a major role, as also do changes in society and the way in which religious ideology may be used for political and social purposes. Administrative systems at local levels need not have been uniform and would more likely have reflected local patterns and social concern.

The degree of state functioning in the three categories mentioned above would differ and this difference would create its own problems for administration (Fussman).

The debate on the relationship between Aśoka and Buddhism continues. The idea that the *dhamma* of Aśoka was in fact Buddhism was earlier questioned and it was suggested that although Aśoka was personally a Buddhist, his policy of *dhamma* was a more broad-based attempt at using ideology to provide a common focus or forum for the multiple groups included in the Mauryan empire (Thapar R. 1961). Such cultural and ideological diversities are faced by most empires and frequently attempts are made to provide a focus which emanates from imperial sources. This can also be seen as a subtle means of propagating the power of the imperial system and a method of persuading local populations to accept subordination. The theory of the *cakkavattin* in Buddhist thought has often been traced back to Aśoka. The participation of Aśoka in the activities of the *sangha* plays an important role in the monastic chronicles of Buddhist sects, particularly in the chronicles from Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* and others from various parts of south-east Asia. Possibly this association coloured earlier readings of the Aśokan inscriptions. Nevertheless the relationship between political authority and the *sangha* is an important aspect of the Buddhist theory of kingship (Tambiah, Bechert 1974).

There has also been much discussion on the economy of the Mauryan period in which agriculture played a central role (Kosambi 1956, Bongard-Levin). The attempt has been to try and assess the amount of land directly cultivated by the state as against private property in land. Given the existing sources it is virtually impossible to make such an assessment. The *Arthaśāstra* stresses the importance of state supervised agriculture, and Megasthenes maintains that all land was royal property, a statement contradicted by Kauṭilya. Possibly the statement attributed to Megasthenes derives more from his familiarity with the Hellensitic system than that of the Mauryan empire (Thapar R. 1988). References to the deportation of prisoners of war and the enforced settling of cultivators in new or deserted areas (Kosambi 1956) and the fact of peasants being unarmed (Thapar R. 1988), raises further

questions about the nature of peasant society, its relations with the state and the notion of peasant protest, all of which are essential to understanding the political economy of an agrarian based system (Alavi, Chayanov, Durrenberger, Scott). The tapping of resources and the networks of exchange existing in the peninsula are being revealed by the excavations of megalithic sites, particularly those in the vicinity of Mauryan inscriptions. The intervention of Mauryan administration in the transition from pre-state to state formation has been analysed for Kalinga and this analysis could be a useful point of departure for other areas (Seneviratne).

The causes of the decline of the Mauryan empire have moved from the earlier ones listed by Vincent Smith, Harprasad Sastri and H. C. Raichaudhuri to other factors. Numismatic evidence indicating a debasement of silver punch-marked coins, (assuming the correctness of a particular chronology for the coins) and statements from the *Arthaśāstra* about double cropping in times of financial crisis, have been brought forward to support the theory that there was a pressure on the Mauryan economy which contributed to the decline of the state (Kosambi 1981). Another argument asserts that an ineffective administration may have been among the causes and further that the Mauryas, unlike the Romans and other imperial systems of the ancient world, did not fully exploit the economic resources available to them (Thapar R. 1988). The pattern of states which emerged, with some areas going back to the *gaṇa-saṅgha* system and others evolving into monarchies, is also suggestive of a lack of uniform control or a heavy exploitation of economic resources.

Bibliography

Adams R. M. 1966. *The Evolution of Urban Society* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Agrawal D. P. 1971. *The Copper-Bronze Age in India* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

———— and A. Ghosh (eds.). 1973 *Radio-Carbon and Indian Archaeology* (Bombay : TIFR).

———— and S. Kusumgar 1974. *Prehistoric Chronology and Radio-carbon Dating in India* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

———— and B. M. Pande (eds.) 1977. *Ecology and Archaeology of Western India* (Delhi : Concept).

———— and D. K. Chakrabarti (eds.) 1979. *Essays in Indian Protohistory* (Delhi : B. R. Publishers).

Alavi H. 1973. "Peasant Classes and Primordial Loyalties." *Journal of Peasant Studies* I. 1, 1 ff.

Allan J. 1967. *A Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India* (London : British Museum).

Allchin B. and F. R. Allchin 1982. *The Rise of Civilisation in India and Pakistan* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Allchin F. R. and K. R. Norman 1985. "Guide to the Asokan Inscriptions." *South Asian Studies* 1, 43-50.

Balibar E. 1970. "The basic concepts of Historical Materialism." In L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London : New Left Books).

Banerjee N. R. 1965. *The Iron Age in India* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Banerji S. C. 1962. *Dharma-sutras : A Study in their Origin and Development* (Calcutta : Punthi Pustak).

Basham A. L. 1951. *History and Doctrine of the Ājīvikas : A Vanished Indian Religion* (London : Luzac).

Basu J. 1969. *India in the Age of the Brahmanas* (Calcutta : Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar).

Bechert H. 1974. "Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography." *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, Series No. 2.

———— (ed.) 1991. *The Dating of the Historical Buddha* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht).

Benveniste E. 1964. "Edicts d'Asoka en Traduction." *Journal Asiatique*, 137-157.

——— 1973. *Indo-European Language and Society* (London : Faber).

Berreman G. D. 1983. "The Evolutionary Status of Caste in Peasant India." In Mencher J., ed., *Social Anthropology of Peasantry* (Bombay : Somaiya Publications), 237-250.

Bhardwaj H. C. 1979. *Aspects of Ancient Indian Technology* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Binford L. R. and S. R. Binford (eds.) 1968. *New Perspectives in Archaeology* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Bloch J. 1950. *Les inscriptions d'Asoka*, Société d'Éditions "Les belles Lettres", Paris.

Bloch M. 1983. *Marxism and Anthropology* (Oxford : Clarendon Press).

Bongard-Levin G. 1985. *Mauryan India* (Delhi : Sterling).

Boserup E. 1965. *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth* (Chicago : Aldine).

Bosworth A. B. 1988. *Conquest and Empire* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Bougle C. 1971. *Essays on the Caste System*, trans. D Pocock (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Braudel F. 1973. *The Mediterranean* (London : Collins).

Brockington J. L. 1983. *Righteous Rama* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Brough J. 1959. "The Tripartite Ideology of the Indo-Europeans; An Experiment in Method." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)* 22, 69-85.

Bulcke C. 1950. *Rāma-kathā* (Prayāga : Prayāga Viśvavidyālaya).

Burrow T. 1965. *The Sanskrit Language* (London : Faber).

——— 1973. "The Proto-Indo-Aryans." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)* 2, 123-140.

Burstein S. 1985. *The Hellenistic Age from the Battle of Ipsos to the Death of Kleopatra VII*, Translated Documents of Greece and Rome 3, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Cardona G. *et al.* (eds.) 1970. *Indo-European and Indo- Europeans* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press).

Carneiro R. L. 1970. "A Theory of the Origin of the State." *Science* 169, 733-8

Chakrabarti D. K. 1976. "The Beginning of Iron in India." *Antiquity* 50, 198, 114-24.

——— 1977. "Distribution of Iron Ores and Archaeological Evidence of Early Iron in India." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient (JESHO)* XX, 166-85.

——— 1984 "Study of the Iron Age in India." *Purātattva* 13-14, 82-85.

——— 1984-85. "Iron and Urbanisation : An Examination of the Indian Context." *Purātattva* 15, 68-74.

——— 1992. *The Early Use of Iron in India,* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Chakravarti U. 1987. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Chanana D. R. 1960. *Slavery in Ancient India as Depicted in Pali and Sanskrit Texts* (Delhi : Peoples Publishing House).

Chattopadhyaya D. P. 1959. *Lokayata, a Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (Delhi : Peoples Publishing House).

——— 1986. *History of Science and Technology in Ancient India— The Beginning* (Calcutta : Mukhopadhyaya K. L.).

Chattopadhyay S. 1974. *The Achaemenids and India,* (rev. ed.) (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Chaudhary R. K. 1964. *The Vratyas in Ancient India* (Varanasi : CSSO-Chowkhamba).

Chowdhury K. A., K. S. Sarasvat and G. M. Buth 1977. *Ancient Agriculture and Forestry in Northern India* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House).

Chayanov A. V. 1966. *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Illinois : The American Economic Association, Homewood).

Claessen H. J. M. and P. Skalnik (eds.) 1978. *The Early State* (The Hague : Mouton).

——— 1981. *The Study of the State* (The Hague : Mouton).

Cleuziou S. 1984. "Oman Peninsula and its Relations Eastward during the Third Millennium." In B. B. Lal and S. P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilisation* (New Delhi : Books and Books), 371-394.

——— and M. Tosi 1985. "The South-Eastern Frontier of the Ancient Near East." In K. Frifelt and P. Sorensen, (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1985* (Copenhagen : NIAS), 15-47.

Cohen R. and E. R. Service (eds.) 1978. *Origins of the State* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press).

Cribb J. 1985. "The Date of India's Earliest Coins." In M. Taddei, and J. Schotsmans (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1983* (Naples: The Oriental Institute), 535-554.

Dandamaev M. A. and V. G. Lukonin 1989. *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Dandekar R. N. 1946-73. *Vedic Bibliography*, 3 vols. Vol. 1, Karnataka Publishing House, Bombay, 1946; Vol. 2, University of Poona, Pune, 1961; Vol. 3, BORI, Pune, 1973; Vol. IV, 1985; Vol. V, 1993.

Dange S. A. 1977. *Cultural Sources from the Vedas* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan).

Dani A. H. 1963. *Indian Palaeography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

—— 1986. *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Pakistan* (Paris: UNESCO)

Darian S. G. 1970. "The Economic History of the Ganges to the end of the Gupta Times." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* XIII, 67-87.

De Jong J. W. 1975. "Recent Russian Publications of the Indian Epic." *The Adyar Library Bulletin* 39, 1-42.

—— 1987. "Notes on the Text of the Asoka Legend." In G. Pollet (ed.), *Indian and the Ancient World*. Pollet.

Deo S. B. and K. Paddayya (eds.) 1985. *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* (Pune: The Deccan College).

Derret J. D. M. 1968. *Religion, Law and the State in India* (London: Faber and Faber).

—— 1978. *Dharmaśāstra and Juridical Literature* (Weisbaden: Harrasowitz).

Deshpande M. M. and P. E. Hook (eds.) 1979. *Aryan and non-Aryan in India* (Ann Arbor: UMCSSAS).

Deva K. and V. Misra 1961. *Vaisali Excavations*, Vaisali.

Dhavalikar M. K. 1975. "The Beginnings of Coinage in India." *World Archaeology* 6, 330-338.

Drekmeier C. 1962. *Kingship and Community in Early India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Dumezil G. 1970. *The Destiny of the Warrior* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).

—— 1971. *The Destiny of the King* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).

—— 1988. *Mitra Varuna* (New York : Zone Books).

Dumont L. 1970. *Homo Hierarchicus : An Essay on the Caste System* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Durrenberger E. P. (ed.) 1984 *Chayanov, Peasants and Economic Anthropology* (London : Academic Press).

Eggermont P. H. L. 1956. *The Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka Moriya : A Comparison of the Data of the Aśokan Inscriptions and the Data of the Tradition* (Leiden : Brill).

Erdosy G. 1988. *Urbanisation in Early Historic India.* BAR International Series 430, Oxford.

Fiser I. 1954. "The Problem of the Seṭṭhi in Buddhist Jātakas." *Archiv Orientalani* XXII, 238-265.

Fried M. H. 1967. *The Evolution of Political Society* (New York : Random House).

Friedman J. and M. J. Rowlands (eds.) 1978. *The Evolution of Social Systems* (London : Duckworth).

Finley M. I. 1980. *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London : Chatto and Windus).

Fussman G. 1987-88. "Central and Provincial Administration in Ancient India : The Problem of the Mauryan Empire." *The Indian Historical Review* 1-2, 43-72.

Garlan Y. 1988. *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press).

Gaur R. C. 1983. *The Excavations at Atranjikhera* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Ghose N. N. 1965. *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture* (Varanasi : CSSO, Chowkhamba).

Ghosh A. 1973. *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla : IIAS).

—— (ed.) 1989. *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Ghoshal U. N. 1968. *A History of Indian Political Ideas* (London : Oxford University Press).

Ghurye G. S. 1969. *Caste and Race in India* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

—— 1979. *Vedic India* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

Gimbutas M. 1970. "Proto-Indo-European Culture : The Kurgan culture during the fifth to the third millennia B.C." In Cardona *et. al* (eds.) *Indo-European and Indo- Europeans* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press), 155-198.

Godelier M. 1772. *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*

(London : New Left Books).

—— 1977. *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Goldman R. P. 1977. *Gods, Priests and Warriors : The Bhrigus of the Mahabharata* (New York : Columbia University Press).

Gonda J. 1968. *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden : Brill).

—— 1975. *Vedic Literature* (Wiesbaden : Harassowitz).

Gopal L. 1980 *Aspects of History of Agriculture in Ancient India* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

Goyal S. R. 1985. *Kautilya and Megasthenes* (Meerut : Kusumanjali Prakashan).

Gurdip Singh *et. al.* 1974. "Late Quaternary History of Vegetation and Climate of the Rajasthan Desert, India." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 267, 467-501.

Gururaja Rao B. K. 1972. *Megalithic Culture in South India*, (Mysore : University of Mysore).

Heesterman J. C. 1957. *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague : Mouton).

—— 1985. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Hegde K. T. M. 1973. "A Model for Understanding Ancient Indian Iron Metallurgy." *Man* 8, 416-421.

—— 1975. "The Painted Grey Ware of India." *Antiquity* 49, 187-190.

—— 1978. "Analyses of Ancient Indian Deluxe Wares." *Archaeo-Physika* 10, 141-155.

Heitzman J. 1984. "Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire." In K. A. R. Kennedy and G. Possehl (eds.), *Studies in the Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia* (Delhi : Oxford University Press), 121-126.

Heninge D. P. 1974. *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford : Clarendon Press).

Hubert H. and M. Mauss 1964. *Sacrifice : Its Nature and Function* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Inden R. 1990. *Imagining India* (Oxford : Blackwell).

Irwin J. 1983. "The True Chronology of Aśokan Pillars." *Artibus Asiae* 44, 4, 247-265.

Jain D. C. 1980. *Economic Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jaina Canonical Literature* (Vaisali : Research Institute of Prakrit Jainology and Ahimsa).

Jaiswal S. 1977. "Presidential Address, Ancient India section." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 23-48.

Jarrige J. F. 1982. "Excavations at Mehrgarh." In G. Possehl (ed.), *Harappan Civilisation* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Jayatilleke K. N. 1963. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London : Allen and Unwin).

Jha H. N. 1970. *The Licchavis* (Varanasi : CSSO Chowkhamba).

Jha V. N. 1970. "Varṇasamkara in the Dharmasūtras : Theory and Practice." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* XIII, 3, 273-288.

Joshi J. P. 1978. "Interlocking of Late Harappan Culture and Painted Grey Ware Culture in the Light of Recent Excavations." *Man and Environment* 2, 100-103.

Joshi M. C. 1976. "Archaeology and the Indian Tradition." *Purātattva* 8, 98-102.

Kane P. V. 1941. History of Dharmaśāstra, 5 vols. (Pune : BORI).

Kangle R. P. 1965. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* (Bombay : University of Bombay).

Karttunen K. 1989. *India in Early Greek Literature* (Helsinki : Studia Orientalia).

Karve I. 1961. *Hindu Society : An Interpretation* (Pune : Deccan College).

Kiparsky P. 1976. "Oral Poetry : Some linguistic and typological considerations." In B. A. Stolz and R. S. Shannon (eds.) *Oral Literature and the Formulae* (Ann Arbor : Michigan University Press).

Kosambi D. D. 1953. "Brahman Clans." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 73, 202-208.

—— 1956. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

—— 1962. *Myth and Reality* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

—— 1965. *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul).

—— 1967. "The Vedic Five Tribes." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87, 33-39.

―――― 1981. *Indian Numismatics* (Delhi : Orient Longman).

Krader L. 1968. *Formation of the State* (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall).

―――― 1972. *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (Assen : Van Gorcum).

―――― 1973. "Karl Marx as Ethnologist." *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Series II, 35, 4, 304-313.

Kuhrt A. and S. Sherwin-White eds. 1987. *Hellenism in the East* (London : Duckworth).

Kuiper F. B. J. 1991. *Aryans in the Rigveda* (Amsterdam : Rodopi)

Lal B. B. 1955. "Excavations at Hastinapur and other Explorations in the Upper Ganga and Sutlej Basins in 1950-52." *Ancient India*, 10-11, 5-151.

―――― 1981. "The Two Indian Epics vis-à-vis Archaeology." *Antiquity* 55 IV, 27-34.

―――― and K. N. Dikshit 1982. *The Ramayana and Archaeology* (Simla : IIAS).

Lal M. 1984. *Settlement History and the Rise of Civilisation in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab from 1500 B.C.-300 A.D.* (Delhi : B. R. Publishing).

―――― 1986. "Iron Tools, Forest Clearance and Urbanisation in the Gangetic Plain." *Man and Environment* 10, 83-90.

Lamotte E. 1988. *A History of Indian Buddhism* (trans.) (Louvain : University Publishers).

Lane Fox R. 1973. *Alexander the Great* (London : Allen Lane).

Lincoln B. 1981. *Priests Warriors and Cattle* (Los Angeles : University of California Press).

Lingat R. 1973. *The Classical Law of India* (Berkeley : University of California Press).

Lloyd G. E. R. 1979. *Magic Reason and Experience* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Mallory J. P. 1989. *In Search of the Indo-Europeans.* (London : Thames and Hudson).

Matilal B. K. 1986. *Perception* (Oxford : Clarendon Press).

Mauss M. 1967. *The Gift* (New York : Norton).

―――― and H. Hubert 1964. *Sacrifice : Its Nature and Function* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Meillassoux C. 1981. *Maidens Meal and Money* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Misra V. N. 1984. "Climate, a Factor in the Rise and Fall of the Indus Civilisation—Evidence from Rajasthan and beyond." In Lal B. B. and Gupta S. P., eds., *Frontiers of the Indus Civilisation* (Delhi : Books and Books), 461-490.

Mitchiner M. 1973. *The Origins of Indian Coinage* (London : Hawkins Publications).

Mukhopadhyaya S. K. 1963. *The Aśokāvadāna* (Delhi : Sahitya Akademi).

Nakamura H. 1980. *Indian Buddhism,* (reprint) 1989 (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Narain A. K. and L. Gopal (eds.) 1966. *Seminar Papers on the Chronology of the Punch-marked coins* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

——— ed. 1966. *Local Coins of Northern India* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

——— and T. N. Roy *The Excavations at Prahladpur* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

——— *Excavations at Rajghat* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

Narayanan M. G. S. 1973. "The Mauryan Problem in Sangam Works in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Indian History,* 53, 2 243-254.

Nath V. 1987. *Dana : Gift System in Ancient India (c. 600 B.C.- c. A.D. 300)* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Norman K. R. 1972. "Notes on the Greek Version of Aśoka's Twelfth and Thirteenth Rock Edicts." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 111-118.

Ong W. J. 1982. *Orality and Literacy* (London : Methuen).

Pande G. C. 1957. *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* (Allahabad : University of Allahabad).

Parpola A. 1988. "The Coming of the Aryans to Iran and India." *Studia Orientalia* 64, 1 ff.

Patel M. 1961. *The Dānastutis of the ṛgveda* (trans.), Vallabha Vidyanagar.

Pathak V. 1963. *History of Kosala upto the Rise of the Mauryas* (Delhi : Motilal Banarasidass).

Pleiner R. 1971. "The Problem of the Beginning Iron Age in India." *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 2, 5-36.

Polanyi K. 1957. *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires* (New York : Free Press).

Pollet G. (ed.) 1987. *India and the Ancient World* (Louvain : Department Orientalistick).

Possehl G. (ed.) 1982. *Harappan Civilisation* (Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Rai G. K. 1974. *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India* (Allahabad : Chaitanya).

Raikes R. 1968. "Kalibangan : Death from Natural Causes." *Antiquity* 42, 286-291.

Ramaswamy C. 1968. "Monsoon over the Indus Valley during the Harappan Period." *Nature* 217, 628-639.

Ramesh K. V. 1987-88. "The Aśokan Inscriptions at Sannathi." *Indian Historical Review* 14, 1-2, 36-42.

Ratnagar S. 1981. *Encounters : The Westerly Trade of the Harappan Civilisation* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Ray N. R. 1976. "Technology and Social Change in Early Indian History : A Note posing a theoretical question." *Purātattva* 8, 132-138.

Ray S. C. 1959. *Stratigraphic Evidence of Coins in Indian Excavations and Some Allied Issues* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

Raychaudhuri H. C. 1953. *Political History of Ancient India* (6th ed.), (Calcutta : University of Calcutta).

Redfield R. and M. Singer 1954. "The Cultural Role of Cities." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, 53-73.

Renfrew C. 1987. *Archaeology and Language* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Renou L. 1957. *Vedic India* (Calcutta : Susil Gupta).

Rey P. P. 1975. "The Lineage Mode of Production." *Critique of Anthropology* 3, 27-79.

Roy T. N. 1983. *The Ganges Civilisation* (Delhi : Ramanand Vidya Bhavan).

Sahi M. D. N. 1978. "New Light on the Life of the PGW People as Revealed from Excavations at Jakhera." *Man and Environment* 2.

Sahlins M. D. 1961. "The Segmentary Lineage : An Organisation of Predatory Expansion." *American Anthropologist* 63, 322-345.

—— 1968. *Tribesmen* (New Jersey : Englewood, Cliffs, Prentice Hall).

Sankalia H. D. 1973. *Ramayana : Myth or Reality* (New Delhi :

Peoples Publishing House).

Schlumberger D. and E. Benveniste. *Epigraphia Indica* 37, 5, 193-200.

────── 1964. "Une Nouvelle Inscription Grecque d'Aśoka." *Comptes Rendus des Sciences de l 'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1-15.

Scott J. C. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant : Subsistance and Rebellion in South-east Asia* (New Haven : Yale University Press).

Scullard H. H. 1974. *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press).

Seddon D. (ed.) 1978. *Relations of Production : Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London : Frank Cass).

Seneviratne S. 1981. "Kalinga and Andhra : The Process of Secondary State Formation in Early India." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalnik (eds.), *The Study of the State* (The Hague : Mouton), 317-338.

Service E. R. 1975. *Origins of the State and Civilization : The Process of Cultural Evolution* (New York : Norton).

Shafer R. 1954. *Enthnography of Ancient India* (Weisbaden : Harassowitz).

Shaffer J. G. 1984. "The Indo-Aryan Invasions : Cultural Myth and Archaeological Reality." In J. R. Lukacs (ed.), *The Peoples of South Asia* (New York : Plenum Press), 77-90.

Shanin T. 1980. "Defining Peasants : Conceptualisation and Deconceptualisations, Old and New in a Marxist Debate." *Peasant Studies* 8, 4ff also included in J. P. Mencher, (ed.), *Social Anthropology of Peasantry* (Bombay : Somaiya, 1983), 60-84.

Sharma G. R. 1960. *The Excavations at Kauśāmbi 1957-59* (Allahabad : University of Allahabad).

────── 1980. *The Beginnings of Agriculture* (Allahabad : Abhinaash Prakashan).

Sharma J. P. 1968. *Republics in Ancient India 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C.* (Leiden : Brill).

Sharma R. S. 1966. *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy* (Bombay : Manaktalas).

────── 1968. *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

────── 1980. *Sudras in Ancient India* (Delhi : Motilal

Banarsidass).

—— 1983. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (Delhi : Macmillan).

Sharma Y. D. 1971. "Seminar on OCP and NBP." *Purātattva* 5, 1-104.

Shrimali K. N. 1983. *History of Panchala to c. A.D. 550,* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Singh H. N. 1982. *The History and Archaeology of Black-and-Red Ware* (Delhi : Sundeep Prakashan).

Singh M. M. 1967. *Life in North-Eastern India in pre-Mauryan Times* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Singh S. B. 1979. *The Archaeology of the Panchala Region* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Singh S. D. 1965. *Ancient Indian Warfare with Special Reference to the Vedic Period* (Leiden : Brill).

Sinha B. P. (ed.) 1969. *Potteries in Ancient India* (Patna : Patna University).

—— and S. R. Roy 1969. *Vaisali Excavations 1958-62.* (Patna : Directorate of Archaeology and Museums).

—— and B. S. Verma 1978. "Preliminary Report of Chirand Excavations for the year 1969." *Patna University Journal* 23, 3, 97 ff.

Sinha K. K. 1959. *The Excavations at Śrāvasti* (Varanasi : Banaras Hindu University).

Sircar D. C. 1979. *Aśokan Studies* (Calcutta : Indian Museum).

Sjoberg G. 1960. *The Preindustrial City : Past and Present* (New York : Free Press).

Smith V. 1920. *Emperor Aśoka,* 3rd ed. (Oxford : Clarendon Press).

Srinivas M. N. 1952. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House).

—— 1962. *Caste in Modern India and other Essays* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House).

Srinivasan D. 1979. *Concept of Cow in the Rigveda* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Srivastava K. M. 1979a. "Kapilavastu and its Precise Location." *East and West* 29, 61-74.

—— 1979b. *Community Movements in Protohistoric India* (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan).

—— 1984. "The Myth of Aryan Invasion of Harappan

Towns." In B. B. Lal and S. P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilisation* (Delhi: Books and Books), 437-443.

Staal F. (ed.) 1983. *Agni*, vols 1, 2, (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press).

de Ste. Croix G. E. M. 1983. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth).

Sternbach L. 1965. *Juridical Studies in Ancient Indian Law* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).

Steward J. 1955. *Theory of Culture Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

Strong J. S. 1983. *The Legend of King Aśoka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Sukthankar V. S. 1957. *On the Meaning of the Mahabharata* (Bombay: Asiatic Society).

Sundara A. 1975. *The Early Chamber Tombs of South India* (Delhi: University Publishers).

Suraj Bhan 1969. "Excavation at Mithathal 1968 (Hissar)." *Journal of Haryana Studies* 1, 1, 1-15.

——— 1975. *Excavations at Mithathal (1968) and other Explorations in the Sutlej-Yamuna Divide* (Kurukshetra: Karukshetra University).

——— and J. G. Shaffer 1978. "New Discoveries in Northern Haryana." *Man and Environment* II, 59-68.

Tambiah S. J. 1976. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Terray E. 1972. *Marxism and Primitive Societies* (New York: Monthly Review Press).

Thakur V. K. 1981. *Urbanisation in Ancient India* (Delhi: Abhinav).

Thapar B. K. 1957. "Maski 1954 : A Chalcolithic site of the Southern Deccan." *Ancient India* 13, 4-143.

Thapar R. 1961. *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Reprint 1973 Oxford University Press, Delhi.

——— 1978a. *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (Delhi: Orient Longman).

——— 1978b. *Exile and the Kingdon: Some Thoughts on the Rāmāyaṇa* (Bangalore: Mythic Society).

——— 1984. *From Lineage to State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

———— 1987. "Archaeological Artefacts and Literary Data : An attempt at Correlation." In B. M. Pande and B. D. Chattopdhyaya (eds.) *Archaeology and History* (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan), 411-418.

———— 1988. *The Mauryas Revisited* (Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi).

———— 1993. *Interpreting Early India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Trautmann T. 1971. *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra - A statistical investigation of the authorship and evolution of the text* (Leiden : Brill).

———— (ed.) 1974. *Kinship and History in South Asia* (Michigan : UMCSSAS).

———— 1981. *Dravidian Kinship* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Tripathi V. 1976. *The Painted Grey Ware - An Iron Age Culture of Northern India* (Delhi : Concept).

Upasak C. S. 1960. *The History and Palaeography of Mauryan Brahmi Script* (Nalanda : Nava Nalanda Mahavihara).

Upadhyaya G. P. 1979. *Brahmanas in Ancient India* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Verma B. S. 1970. "Excavations at Chirand : New Light on the Indian Neolithic Culture Complex." *Purātattva* 4, 19-23.

Vishnumitre 1968. "Protohistoric Records of Agriculture in India." *Bose Research Institute Transactions* 31, 3, 87-106.

Wagle N. 1966. *Society at the Time of the Buddha* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

Weber M. 1967. *The Religion of India* (trans.) (New York : The Free Press).

Wheatley P. 1971. *The Pivot of the Four Quarters* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press).

Witzel M. 1987. "On the Location of Vedic Texts and Schools." In G. Pollet ed. *India and the Ancient World* Louvain, 173-209.

Wolf E. 1966. *Peasants* (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall).

Yule P. 1983a. "On the Function of the Prehistoric Copper Hoards of the Indian Subcontinent." In J. Schotsmans and M. Taddei (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1983*, (Naples : Instituto Universitario Orientale), 495-500.

———— 1983b. "Metalwork of the Bronze Age in India." *Prehistorische Bronzefunde*, Arbeitlung 20 Band 8, 1-128.

IV

Trade and Contacts

H. P. RAY

The Early Historical period, roughly dated between 100 B.C. and A. D. 400 is marked by far-reaching changes in both the economic and social fabric of the subcontinent. Under the Mauryas the epicentre lay in the middle Ganga valley, but in the post-Mauryan period the focus shifted to areas which had hitherto been on the periphery. In the northwest the beginning of the Christian era saw the rise of the Kuṣāṇa Empire with the major centres being Pushkalavati and Mathura. The Kṣatrapas in the west controlled a greater part of Gujarat, while constantly pushing towards the Deccan. Under the Sātavāhanas there was a spurt in monumental construction in the Deccan, with the major centres being linked to the ports on the west coast through a complex network of routes. Further south, the megalithic culture gave way to the chiefdoms of the Coḷas, Ceras and Pāṇḍyas in the fertile coastal tracts.

This growth of settlements and urban centres was not just spatial, but archaeological excavations document a technological improvement in the structural remains as well. At almost all sites there is an extensive use of brick and tiles and the Early Historical levels are far richer in material remains than those of the previous periods. Inscriptional data from Buddhist monastic sites indicate that the prosperity was not restricted to the elite, but had percolated to occupational castes and groups. There are several epigraphs recording donations to monasteries by a cross-section of specialized workers such as blacksmiths, fishermen, gardeners and so on.

The post-Mauryan centuries were marked by an increase in

the minting and circulation of coins vastly superior to the punch-marked coinage of the Mauryas. In addition to coins of the major dynasties of the Kuṣāṇas, Kṣatrapas and Sātavāhanas, there were several varieties of local copper coins also in circulation. Tribal coins from Punjab and Rajasthan are known and nearly 175 types of coins date from the late second century B.C. to the early fourth century A.D. (Sharma 1983, 180). However, apart from cataloguing and documenting the coins, little research has been directed on the comparative value of the coins or into exchange systems.

A major issue that confronts ancient Indian historiography is to what extent can this prosperity be attributed to the expansion of external trade contacts, particularly the so-called 'Roman contacts' in the early centuries of the Christian era or has the impact of 'Roman' trade been exaggerated. The beginning of social change around the Christian era can be traced to the internal dynamics in the Ganga valley that led to the emergence of monarchies by the middle of the first millennium B.C. and especially to the rise of Magadha in the third century B.C. The maintenance of a state infrastructure required additional resources which were mobilized by tapping the revenues from both agriculture and trade. In the north the major highway was the *uttarapatha* connecting Charsada and Taxila in the northwest to Pataliputra, the capital of the Mauryas, via Mathura, Kausambi and Banaras. Traffic to the Deccan followed the *dakṣiṇāpatha* praised by the *Arthaśāstra* (VII. 12.24) for the trade in shells, diamonds, precious stones, pearls and gold. In addition there was the riverine route along the Ganga with Tamralipti or Tamluk as the major port on the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Another factor that contributed in no small way was the institution-alization of the Buddhist Saṅgha which led to greater interaction between the monastic establishments and the laity. As a result of these changes Buddhist monastic institutions were ideally suited to act as pioneers in newly settled areas or to act as nucleii of information systems at strategic points along trade routes.

Thus the question that needs to be analysed is the role of long-distance trade in stimulating social change. The first section of this chapter deals with a discussion on the

theoretical concepts of trade while in the latter part the emphasis is on the relevance of these constructs to Indian historical writing as evident from a historiographical survey of the literature.

Interest in pre-industrial economic systems perhaps dates from the works of anthropologists like M. Mauss to L. H. Morgan and C. Levi-Strauss. Morgan's fieldwork among the American Indians first led to the realization that the non-European political and social structures stood in marked contrast to those of the Europeans and could not be studied on the same terms. This stimulated further research on differences in the economic structures and led to the now well-known theory of Mauss on the modes of exchange. Mauss questioned the prevalent assumption that primitive economics were 'natural economies' which produced for subsistence rather than exchange. He stressed that natural economy was an unrealistic concept and that even the egalitarian clan-based societies produce large surpluses which they exchange for various reasons not directly economic. He termed this system a "gift economy". While Mauss concentrated primarily on the exchange of things as gifts, Levi-Strauss added another dimension by focussing on the exchange of people, for example, the study of the marriage system as a system of the gift exchange of women.

From this historical and anthropological record emerged K. Polanyi's Substantivist school. Polanyi defines trade as "a relatively peaceful method of acquiring goods which are not available on the spot" (p. 257). It is to be distinguished from the quest for game, booty and plunder by the mutuality of the movement, which also ensures its broadly peaceful and fairly regular character. An analysis of trade involves the study of a number of constituents such as personnel engaged in trade, specific commodities involved and transportation of the goods. Similarly trade itself may also be divided into three main types: gift trade, administered trade and market trade. Gift trade is based on relations of reciprocity, while administered trade presupposes relatively well-organized trading bodies and treaty relationships that are more or less formal. Market trade, in contrast, follows the forces of the supply-demand-price mechanism. In Polanyi's study of trade, market

activities are associated with industrialized capitalist societies and are largely considered irrelevant to pre-industrial economies. This framework has been adopted in H. Bohannon and G. Dalton's fourfold classification of African societies in terms of whether the 'market principle' was dominant or peripheral (1968). In contrast, the work by C. Belshaw on traditional exchange and modern markets and M. Nash on primitive and peasant economic systems (1960) was more analytic and influential. More recent studies have argued that trade represents a conscious economic activity in which the objective of the various participants is to obtain an optimal return for their own goods. This perspective focusses on the exchange partners and an analysis of their relations allows us to understand the motives, strategies and calculations that fuelled and directed the exchange.

A further dimension to the study of trade was added by the volume on African trade edited by C. Meillasoux. Of interest to this discussion is Meillasoux's analysis of the complex, unstable relationship between war and trade which led to the development of a class of warriors and a class of merchants. This rivalry was accentuated by the fact that the military aristocracy was generally pagan, while the traders were Muslims. Thus at nodal points in trade networks Muslim saintly communities prospered as cohesive, militant nuclei (1971, 56).

M. Sahlins (1965, 1968) placed the various types of exchange systems envisaged by the Substantivists in an evolutionary framework. For example, reciprocity was linked to segmentary societies and redistribution to chiefdoms and states. Though some positive association exists between different types of exchange mechanism and the levels of economic development, yet no cause and effect relationship can be postulated. I. Hughes' study of New Guinea exchange systems (1971) shows that reciprocity and redistribution may operate as complementary structures within one social context.

The Formalists, on the other hand, take what are regarded as universally applicable concepts of economic theory, that is, scarcity, optimization, surplus and analyse primitive and peasant economies in these terms. This approach has considerably influenced archaeological studies and mathematical

models have often been used to quantify these principles (Hodder 1974, Renfrew 1977). A major limitation of this approach is that it makes little attempt to explore the social contexts and political strategies that lie behind artefact distribution.

The role of long-distance trade in bringing about social change assumes importance in the writings of Renfrew (1975, 3-59). According to this theory, intra-tribal trade could lead to the concentration of wealth and hence of economic power in the hands of a small number of favourably situated chiefs and kin elders, who would then emerge as the ruling elite. At the same time the ethnographic record clearly indicates a generalized distribution of power in tribal societies and ceremonial inhibitions to resource allocation (Sahlins 1965). These inbuilt mechanisms would make any appropriation of power or monopoly over trade difficult and requires an explanation. It has been clarified that only trade in relatively large amounts or that which involved a higher order of craft production and luxury goods would be sufficient to overcome tribal mechanisms inhibiting stratification (Fried 1967, 182-4, 203-4). This means that trade is effective as a state-forming mechanism primarily in the case of secondary states. In a detailed study of state formation in aboriginal Hawaii, it has been shown how the surplus of trade wealth could be chanelled by an emerging political elite to support an army and a bureaucracy (Webb 1975, 180).

More recently it has been suggested that the market plays a crucial role in the emergence of secondary states. At first chiefs are drawn into the long-distance trade in luxury goods to procure the symbols of power and the 'currency' to become patrons and allies. As the market increasingly threatens the traditional foundations of chiefly power, chiefs must increasingly attempt to control if not monopolize trade. The same force of arms that makes that control possible can be used to wage warfare without and to extract greater tributes within (Kipp and Schortman 1989).

A corollary of these models is that accumulation and reinvestment of wealth is closely linked to the dominant ideology of a community. It is then a change in the ideological affiliation that would result in social change. This is in

keeping with the growing realization of an inter-relationship between the society and the economy and the acceptance that it is social and cultural forces that determine economic growth.

It is also in recent years that luxury trade has been accepted as a motivating factor of social change. It has been emphasized that technology was seldom developed to serve functional purposes, instead it served and promoted value systems in the spheres of religion and politics. Thus the finest bronze castings were not made for implements or weapons, but for ritual vessels and this is true of luxury trade as well. Archaeological research has shown that for thousands of years the highest value was placed in human society on substances which had little utilitarian value. Considerable effort and energy was expended on the making of jewellery, the prime purpose of wearing it being to denote status. "In each of the early civilizations the emphasis rested on opaque or translucent stones, in China on jade, but elsewhere on different forms of chalcedony, lapis lazuli and turquoise, the qualities of each of which could be displayed effectively by the simple process of polishing their surfaces smooth" (Clark 1986, 10).

The point needs to be stressed that the choice of a gift in an exchange act is not arbitrary. Instead the choice is made within a social and ideological context. Any analysis of exchange systems must also take into consideration the symbolism of the artefacts exchanged as this provides the basis for the legitimisation of power and status (Hodder 1982, 207).

These theoretical constructs could prove useful in the Indian context. For example the emergence of the Sātavāhana state in the first century B.C. in the Deccan may be seen as the culmination of a process that started with the expansion of Mauryan trade networks to the Deccan in the third to second centuries B.C. This trade continued in the post-Mauryan period and led to the growth of market-centres in western Deccan, while in eastern Deccan power was concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite of Mahārathis and Mahābhojas (Ray 1989c). The expansion of maritime trade around the second to first centuries B.C. provided an added stimulus and led to the consolidation of power by the Sātavāhanas in the western Deccan. Epigraphical and literary data suggest that the

Sātavāhana dynasty had tribal origins and continued to maintain marriage alliances with other 'chief' groups such as the Mahārathis and the Mahābhojas (Ray 1986). Another critical dimension in this process of trade and social change was provided by the expansion of Buddhism along trade networks and the location of monastic establishments at nodal points on these routes. Unfortunately studies on ancient Indian trade have suffered on account of the trends set in Indian historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many early writers such as J. Mill and V. Smith started with preconceived views of the Indian past and propagated concepts of Oriental Despotism.

It was argued that there was no private ownership of land and that the villages being purely agricultural were otherwise autonomous. As irrigation facilities were controlled by the state, it also acquired the surplus agricutural produce by way of revenue. In this situation there was no trade or commerce; towns were purely administrative centres; and the only commodities produced were for royal or courtly consumption.

The discovery of a manuscript of the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and its translation by R. Shama Sastry had considerable impact in challenging the theories that ancient Indian society was unconcerned with political relationships. This trend was continued by the nationalist historians of the twentieth century who regarded the ancient period of Indian history as one of considerable prosperity and general contentment. This resulted in the publication of several monographs on such varied subjects as guilds, shipping, money-lending and banking.

A refreshing change in the study of trade was made by D. D. Kosambi based on his fieldwork in Maharashtra which led him to demarcate Mother-Goddess cult sites along prehistoric tracks. Many of these became prosperous and prominent Buddhist centres developed at these spots in the Early Historical period (1962). These were well-endowed with land and money donations both by the ruling Sātavāhanas and by members of the trading community. Analogies with Buddhist monastic establishments in China led Kosambi to postulate a symbiotic relationship between the monastic centres and the local populace. Another point of departure was his emphasis on commodity production; "the western coastal strip could not

have been profitably cleared of its dense forest, let alone settled with its present crowded population, without this tree [coconut] and the heavy commodity production based upon its exploitation in full" (1981, 189). The fibre, wood and oil of the fruit could be used in a variety of ways for consumption or as materials for boat-building. These products could be exchanged for agricultural produce of the hinterland and this formed the basis of the coastal economy.

In contrast to this are some contemporary writings on Early Historical trade which are useful compilations of the available data, but which stop short of an incisive analytical framework. Thus the study by D. R. Das has several chapters devoted to mineral resources, occupations and crafts, trade and commerce and banking. These provide detailed information from literary sources and inscriptions, but make no attempt to use these for reconstructing social change. Two other works in the same genre are those by H. Chakraborti and B. Shrivastava. Similarly K. Gopalachari's work surveys the towns situated on the east coast and the land system and guilds of the Andhra region in the early centuries A.D., but the reconstruction of economic life is far from adequate.

Moti Chandra's study in Hindi broke new ground in emphasizing the role of indigenous traders—the *vaṇijas, seṭṭhis, gahapatis* — where the data are drawn from a large number of literary texts. It covers a wide canvas starting from the Harappan civilization to the eleventh century A.D. The chapters are chronologically arranged and include one on maritime travel and another on the depictions of the caravan in Indian art.

In spite of this, many works reiterate the unenterprising nature of Indian traders and their inability to carry their wares to overseas markets. G. Adhya analyses both overland and maritime trade based primarily on literary sources and reaches the conclusion that : "In the commerce between India and the Mediterranean countries the initiative usually came either from the recipient countries or from the Arabs and Axumites who acted as middlemen. But in the case of trade with South East Asia it seems that mostly the Indians themselves were the active agents" (1966, 175).

The growing body of archaeological data has led scholars

to rethink the extensiveness of the Early Historical trade networks. Bactria in the northwest was the nodal point for trade with central Asia and China. A second route from central Asia connected Kashgar via Gilgit in Kashmir to the Kuṣāṇa north. In this region, traversed by the modern Karakoram highway, many engravings and inscriptions in Kharoshthi, Brahmi and Chinese have been found on rocks and boulders (A. H. Dani 1981, 1983; K. Jettmar 1982). These inscriptions range in date from the first century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. and indicate the frequent use of the route connecting the Indian plains to Xin-Jiang through Gilgit.

Excavations at Taxila, 30 kms. northwest of the modern city of Rawalpindi, have highlighted its strategic importance astride three major routes: one from northern and eastern India; second from west Asia; and a third from Kashmir and central Asia (Marshall 1951). From Taxila, the Mauryan highway described by Pliny connected the northwest with Mathura and further to Pataliputra in the Ganga plains. Another route branched off south from Mathura to Ujjain, Mahismati or Maheshwar and then to Bharuch at the mouth of the Narmada on the west coast. In the Deccan, lines of communication generally followed the passes in the Ghats and a major route was the trans-peninsular highway linking Amaravati on the east coast to Bharuch on the west via Ter, Paithan and Nasik.

The northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent has been the melting pot of influences emanating from several different directions, not the least being those from the Hellenistic world. Perhaps a lasting legacy of the invasion of Alexander was the spread of Hellenism in the east. Soon after Alexander's death, the territories conquered by him were divided among his successors—the Seleucids in the Middle East and the Indo-Greek kingdoms in Bactria and Gandhara. Excavations at Ai-Khanum in northeastern Afghanistan have revealed the remains of a Hellenistic town complete with an acropolis, temple, gymnasium and probably an agora (Bernard 1967). The history of the Indo-Greek kings themselves is often confusing as it has been reconstructed mainly on the basis of their coins bearing legends in Greek and later in Brahmi as well (Tarn 1950, Narain 1960). An interesting study has shown how ideological biases have influenced the works of different

scholars often leading to contradictory results (Guillaume 1986). Another point that needs to be emphasized is the totally inadequate use of numismatic data for a reconstruction of Early Historical trade so far, as a majority of the available works focus on cataloguing and identifying coin finds (Sarma 1980).

Archaeological excavations at sites in the northwest have shown the continued importance of the region under the Kuṣāṇas. Significant results were obtained during the excavations at Begram—the royal city of the Kuṣāṇa king Kadphises, located in the Kabul valley. Phase II at the site produced a collection of exotic wares from the Mediterranean, India and China. This led R. E. M. Wheeler (1955) to hypothesize that the hoard represented a royal treasury accumulated by collecting goods in the form of toll from traders passing through the region.

Another characteristic feature of the Early Historical period was the location of Buddhist monastic establishments at strategic points along these routes; Jaina presence being limited to Mathura and the Orissan coast. Thus the major Buddhist centres were Taxila, Mathura, Sanchi, Bharhut, Junnar, Kanheri, Amaravati and so on. A large number of inscriptions at these sites record that resources for the religious edifices came from three categories of donors; the ruling elite; merchants and other occupational groups; and monks and nuns. The epigraphs make a distinction between the financier, the caravaneer, the general trader and dealers in specific commodities such as salt and sugar. The organization of guilds was equally complex and the terms used vary from region to region. In the Kharoshthi inscriptions of the northwest, it is the *sahāya* or association that is prominent, while it is the *śreṇī* or guild in central India and the *nigama* or *goṣṭhī* in Andhra. The guild also acted as a rudimentary banking institution accepting money as deposit and paying an interest on it. This complex organization of trade is further corroborated by the large variety of coins in circulation at this time and already referred to earlier.

In contrast to land routes, little attention has been paid to riverine and coastal navigation. The papers by S. G. Darian (1970, 1977) remedy the situation somewhat and trace the

expansion of commercial traffic on the Ganga from the Mauryan to the Gupta periods, based primarily on inscriptional and literary data. An early study of the coastal sea-traffic to south India is the unpublished Ph.D thesis of C. Maloney. The products of the south first known in north India were pearls of the Indo-Sri Lankan straits, conches and gems. "Trade originating on the west and north-west coast led eventually to the implantation of north Indian culture and language on both sides of the Indo-Ceylon straits" (p. 285). Maloney is also the first scholar to suggest an association of the *paradvar*, a fishing and trading community mentioned in Sangam literature to the Barata inscriptions of northern Sri Lanka. Ray (1988a) has traced the development of the east coast network, outlined the local linkages and shown its inclusion in the wider regional trading circuits.

Though marine resources have been exploited since the protohistoric period, the beginnings of a coastal network dates to the middle of the first millennium B.C. A large number of Asokan epigraphs occur along the coasts, the commodities involved in this coastal traffic being primarily gold, pearls, diamonds and gems from south India. By the second to first centuries B.C. the entire east coast and the north coast of Sri Lanka formed a part of a larger trade network as is evidenced by the occurrence of Rouletted Ware sherds from Chandraketugarh in the Bengal delta to Kantarodai on the Sri Lankan coast. The Rouletted Ware continues upto the third century A. D., though the contemporaneity of the east coast sites cannot be established without further archaeological excavations. In addition a distinctive local coinage was being minted in several pockets along the coast. A unique series of copper punch-marked coins from the Ganga delta show the use of the ship symbol for the first time (*Indian Archaeology - a Review*, henceforth *IAR* 1960-61, 70, 1961-62, 107, 1962-63, 46). This symbol was subsequently adopted by the later Sātavāhanas for their coins circulating along the Andhra coast. As contrasted to this, the west coast was divided into two sailing circuits : one extending along the Gujarat and Konkan coasts, while the other dominant along the Malabar coast. Around the beginning of the Christian era, these coastal networks were integrated into trans-oceanic sailing circuits

both with the Mediterranean region as well as with countries of Southeast Asia.

Interest in the study of Mediterranean contacts with India goes back to the early years of the nineteenth century, to the publication of largely descriptive accounts based on Greek and Latin texts. These included primarily the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* an anonymous mariner's account of early maritime trade with the Indian subcontinent. Four monographs which considerably influenced early studies were those of H. G. Rawlinson, E. H. Warmington, M. H. Charlesworth and R. E. M. Wheeler. The objective of all these works, however, remained the same—to provide justification for the commercial enterprise of European nations in general and to support British exploitation of Indian resources in particular. As Warmington put it :

"The moving force from first to last came from the West; the little-changing people of the East allowed the West to find them out. We have then, on the one side India of the Orient, then as now, a disjointed aggregate of countries but without the uniting force of British rule which she now has and while open to commerce, content generally to remain within her borders and to engage in agriculture" (1928, 1).

The issue of Roman trade with the East has been re-examined in recent years. J. I. Miller approached the subject somewhat differently. He started by listing spices described in Classical literature and used not only as condiments in food but as ingredients in ointments, drugs, as preservatives and as incense. This was followed by a botanical identification and demarcation of the natural habitat of the plant, leading to the demarcation of routes not only to the Indian subcontinent but also to Southeast Asia and China. But the producers were not always the carriers—the carrying trade was largely a special-ized and professional matter with little overlapping. In spite of political changes and other modifying factors, the demand for spices continued and carriers by the best available route were always found. It has been suggested that Indians from the Konkan coast in their own ships sailed for ports at the mouth of the Red Sea, while southern Arabians were the carriers from Malabar and possibly also from Sri Lanka and the Greeks were the carriers from India to Egypt.

Many of Miller's conclusions have come in for criticism by Raschke. Miller's botanical identification of spices mentioned in Classical literature is not universally accepted. The second problem is that of deciding which of the many spices imported into the Mediterranean were in fact South Asian in origin. For example, both sesame seeds and cardamom have been included by Miller among imports from India, but both of these grow also in Egypt and there is documentary evidence for their production in that region during the Roman period. The problem is further complicated because Classical writers could not be depended upon to indicate the precise source of the spices. A case in point are cinnamon and cassia. A majority of the ancient sources attribute both these to Arabia and East Africa, the only exception being Strabo. This has led to a debate among scholars with Miller proposing that cinnamon and cassia were carried from the islands of Southeast Asia to the coast of Africa near Madagascar and then transported overland to the ports of Somalia—a view which finds little support.

Another myth that has been exploded is the oft-quoted statement by Pliny regarding the imbalance of Rome's trade with the East and the drain of currency from the Roman Empire. Though an economic decline is evident in the third century A.D., the breakdown of the Roman Empire occurs only in the first half of the fifth century A.D. and the data for the fourth century shows a developing economy. Besides the outflow of gold in the form of coins from the Roman Empire neither assumed dramatic proportions nor could by itself have caused the decline of the empire. The decline was due instead to an internal process of disintegration (Bernardi 1970). The figures quoted by Pliny were perhaps relevant only for Rome and not for the empire as a whole. It is now accepted that India's trade was not directly with Rome, but with Egypt. Records available from Egypt indicate the complexity of the tax mechanism and at least a dozen points in the region through which commodities could have been imported. This would have made it impossible for the Elder Pliny to obtain any accurate figures for the annual quantity of the balance of payments deficit. The other aspect of this problem is the find of Roman coins in the Indian subcontinent and their use in

demarcating chronological shifts in the trade networks. An analysis of the coin hoards by Raschke shows the predominance of issues of Augustus and Tiberius and this has led scholars to suggest that trade was adversely affected by Nero's debasement of the silver coinage in A.D. 63, 64. The point to be emphasized is that the commercial hoards in India in no way reflect the coinage in circulation at this time in Egypt. The issues of Augustus and Tiberius were preferred for payment in India and money changers and bankers probably expended a great deal of effort in collecting these coin types. When the preferred types of coins began to be in short supply they were substituted by gold or bullion. The evidence from Egypt does not indicate any cessation of the trade, on the contrary it appears that the use of Indian spices in the third and fourth centuries was more widespread than before.

P. J. Turner's detailed analysis of Roman coins (1989) found in India indicates that initially silver coins were preferred for the eastern trade. But once gold was introduced, it was accepted in preference. There was a distinct shortage of gold from the period of Nero's reforms of the currency to Trajan's time. However, after this, *aurei* dating throughout the second century occur, distributed over a much wider area than hitherto.

Among the other classicists who have been working on trade contacts with the Indian subcontinent is Casson whose primary interest is the maritime history of the ancient world. He has worked out (1980, 1988) in detail the sailing conditions for a journey to India, as compared to that to the African coast. Trading ventures to the east were handled by the merchants of Alexandria. Commodities were collected and brought along the Nile route to Coptos. From here they were transferred to donkeys and camels and carried across Egypt's eastern desert either to Myos Hormos or Berenice—the major port on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. Ships bound for India must have left the Red Sea ports in July so as to reach the west coast of India not earlier than September when the southwest monsoon was approaching its end and had hence quietened down. The return voyage was much less of a problem and the milder northeast monsoon winds could be used for this purpose between November to April. The round

voyage took about a year, but these trading ventures were within the reach of owners of powerful vessels, only those that could withstand the southwest monsoon winds. In contrast, a venture along the east coast of Africa was safe and cheap and as it involved only short coastal hauls, it could be undertaken by owners of crafts of moderate size.

Another dimension to the study of Roman trade with India was added by the scientific analysis of Early Historical coins so as to determine the presence of imported metals in them. This led to some interesting results : the lead isotope ratios of coins of the Kura kings of the Deccan differed from any known Asian source of lead but closely matched those of the Sardinian and Spanish lead sources exploited by the Romans in the first century A.D. Also the silver coins of Nahapana show a striking similarity with the pre-Nero silver issues not only in their fineness, but also the lead and gold content (Seeley and Turner).

The beginning of sea trade between Rome and India has been reworked in recent years on the basis of the ceramic evidence. This is particularly significant as much of the interpretive framework for early south Indian studies has been dominated by Wheeler's excavations at Arikamedu in 1945. It was here that the Rouletted Ware was first identified and dated between the first to second centuries A.D. The Rouletted Ware is a fine ware, wheel-turned and frequently black-slipped. The shape is usually a dish and it is decorated with 'rouletted' patterns on the inner side of the base. Because rouletting was new to south India, it was regarded as an importation from the Mediterranean region. The excavations also yielded sherds of *terra sigillata* (Arretine Ware) and amphorae fragments and this led Wheeler to conclude that Arikamedu was a Roman settlement superimposed on a purely native and local culture (1946, 22). Subsequent analysis has shown that a date of second century B.C. can be postulated for the earliest occurrence of Rouletted Ware at Arikamedu. Similarly the amphorae fragments have been identified as those of first century B.C. specimens from the Greek islands in the Mediterranean. Besides only the technique of rouletting or 'chattering' may be traced to Mediterranean influence—in its fabric and shape the ware has close

similarities to local pottery (Begley 1988). The available evidence then indicates that though Arikamedu was an important trading centre, it was one of many along the Coromandel coast, and it seems highly unlikely that there was 'Roman occupation' of the site.

Though there is little evidence for the presence of Roman settlements in India, there is no doubt that trade with the Mediterranean region led to a spurt in local craft production. Many items were made in imitation of Hellenistic and Roman fashions, a case in point being the so-called 'Roman lamps' found at a large number of sites in India. It is this impact of maritime trade in the Deccan that is analysed in another work (Ray 1986).

Agriculturally the Deccan is far less productive than the Ganga plains in the north and for the greater part of the first millennium B.C. it remained on the periphery. It was the expansion of trade networks in the first century B.C. that coincided with the development of urban centres in the region and provided a spurt to the excavation of Buddhist monastic establishments in the vicinity of towns and ports. A large number of donatory inscriptions indicate the prosperity of merchants and other occupational groups and also show a society in the process of transformation from its tribal moorings. Metronyms are mentioned both by the rulers and the common people in marked contrast to the brahmanical dictum regarding the change of *gotra* by women at the time of marriage. Similarly women owned wealth and made donations to the Buddhist Sangha both independently as well as with their families. The pioneering role of the Sangha is reinforced by the land grants of the Sātavāhanas who at the same time perform Vedic sacrifices and declare themselves to be *brāhmaṇas*. An interesting case is that of the *yavanas*. The term *yavana* originally referred to Ionian Greeks, but by the beginning of the Christian era it was used indiscriminately for traders and others from the eastern Mediterranean colonies as well as Arabs. It was perhaps the desire to participate in the Buddhist trading diaspora in the Deccan that led the *yavanas* to make donations to the Buddhist Sangha (Ray 1988).

Another study that examines the interconnection between Buddhism and trade is Liu's work on Kuṣāṇa India and China

(1958). Chinese standard histories from the Han through the Northern dynasties (206 B.C.-A.D. 534) indicate that coral, pearls, glass and certain kinds of fragrances were transported from or through India to China, while silk was the major item transported from China to India. Transactions between the two regions included gift trade, where foreign envoys carried gifts across Central Asia to the Chinese court, as well as some form of administered trade. The Chinese government maintained a monopoly on the production of high-quality silk and other luxury items and this would have led to government control of the merchandise.

Active trade between the two regions paralleled the transmission of Buddhism to China in the first six centuries A.D. A study of Buddhist texts shows how changes within the Sangha led to a more meaningful relationship with lay worshippers. By the early centuries A.D., *stūpa* construction had gained popularity and these were now decorated with festoons of fine silk, while crystal and lapis lazuli were used for relic caskets. In return for generous donations was the promise of a higher status, for example, the status of the gods and material wealth. This was a significant change from early Buddhism which emphasized accumulation of merit in return for food and clothing to the monks.

The mode of transmission and the date of the spread of Buddhism to China is a matter of debate among scholars, though the general consensus is that this gradual spread took place between the first half of the first century B.C. and the middle of the first century A.D. At this time the Chinese controlled the eastern part of Central Asia and it is only a century later that there is concrete evidence of Buddhism in China. As opposed to the land route to China, less is known of a maritime route between India and China in the early centuries A.D. It would seem that contact between the two regions was not so much direct as through a series of interlinked local sailing circuits involving peninsular Southeast Asia as well.

Chinese literary texts have also been used for a reconstruction of Kuṣāṇa trade and economy. On the basis of these references, B. N. Mukherjee has suggested a flourishing horse-trade conducted by Yueh-chih merchants by sea with the

Koying country (1970). Koying has been located variously in peninsular Malaysia or the east coast of Sumatra. The memory of the activities of Yueh-chih horse dealers in Southeast Asia is probably perpetuated in the representation of two person-ages clad in the Yueh-chih dress along with a horse in an engraving on a drum found in the island of Sangeang off the coast of Sumbawa, Lesser Sunda islands, and dated to the second or third century A.D. (1970, 138).

These references become significant in view of the recent discoveries of Kharoṣṭhi inscriptions on pot-sherds and terracotta sealings found in the coastal districts of Bengal (Mukherjee, 1989). The contents of these inscriptions are varied—while some carry personal names, others refer to agriculturists, traders and religious formulae. But perhaps what is relevant to our discussion is a seal depicting a masted ship, an ear of corn and a taurine symbol. There is a legend along the margin which reads: "the voyage in three directions by Yasoda whose wealth is earned and donated" (Mukherjee). These discoveries have added a new dimension to the early maritime networks of lower Bengal.

One of the problems of Early Historical trade is to establish the nature and extent of political control in spite of the extensive literature available on Kuṣāṇas (Fussman 1987). Thus the influence of the Kuṣāṇas east of Mathura remains problematic, though Kuṣāṇa coins have been found in Bengal. P.H.L. Eggermont (1966) has argued for a major role for the Muruṇḍas—a tribe in this eastern network. J. Heitzman in his paper surveys the location of early Buddhist monastic sites vis-à-vis other settlements and concludes that although Buddhist monastic sites were consistently associated with nonmonastic location and with the two institutional components—empire and trade—there is little archaeological evidence to suggest that the Buddhist sites themselves had any purely political or economic role. Instead religious donations by lay worshippers and the ruling elite should be seen as a means of establishing a hierarchy within the network.

In an attempt to analyse the social role of Buddhism in south-east India and Sri Lanka, S. Seneviratne's study (1985) traces the development of contacts between the two regions from the protohistoric period onwards. Locational analysis

shows the exploitation of marine resources of the Indo-Sri Lankan straits in the megalithic period and the presence of an exchange network between south India and northern Sri Lanka. These exchange networks were controlled by local chieftains and groups associated with the political elite. The expansion of long-distance trade in the post-Mauryan period resulted in the intensification of commerce and the expansion of Buddhism both in southeast India and Sri Lanka. The location of Early Historical Buddhist sites in the two regions shows a close correspondence in coastal areas with the earlier Black and Red Ware megalithic settlements, and almost all of these are on important trade routes.

Of late the study of Early Historical trade has acquired an added dimension. On the basis of archaeological findings and Fa-hsien's description of the middle Ganga valley, it has been argued that the urban economy in north India declined after the Kuṣāṇa period. V. K. Thakur has advanced six reasons for this : natural disasters, political changes, foreign invasions, feudal wars and the sacking of cities, religious preference and changes in economic structure (1981, 295-296). R. S. Sharma has developed the hypothesis further and has indicated that the decline of long-distance trade both with the Mediterranean region and with central Asia and China was an important cause of urban decay in the late third and fourth centuries A.D. (1987, 181). In his analysis of Roman trade Sharma relies heavily on figures quoted by Pliny with regard to the drain of gold from the Mediterranean to the East. As shown earlier, Pliny's figures and their link with the decline of the Roman Empire have been questioned by several scholars and are no longer acceptable. Besides Sharma takes no notice of the growing body of archaeological data from sites in Southeast Asia which suggest expanding maritime trade and contacts with India · in the first half of the first millennium A.D.

The most commonly employed terms for Southeast Asia in Sanskrit literature are *suvarṇabhūmi, suvarṇadvīpa* · or *suvarṇakuḍya*. Perhaps the earliest reference to trade with *suvarṇabhūmi* occurs in the *Arthaśāstra* (II. xi. 78-79). Subsequently the same toponym is mentioned fairly frequently in Sanskrit and Buddhist literature. The *Jātakas* refer to ocean voyages to the region (Vol. VI, 22, III, 124, IV, 86) and in the

Milindapañha, suvaṇṇabhūmi occurs in a schedule of ports where shipping congregates. A second schedule is to be found in the *Mahā Niddesa*, a second or third century A.D. work which also has a detailed description on the hazards of ocean voyaging to a series of foreign lands. In spite of the large number of references, none of the texts specifies either the precise territories indicated by the term or the nature of the contacts and this has led to various interpretations by scholars (Wheatley, 1983, 266). This is particularly so as legends about the origins of kingdoms in Southeast Asia often trace the ancestry back to Indian princes and merchants. According to the traditional chronicles of Burma, for example, the earliest kingdom in the Irrawaddy valley was founded by a prince who came from India, having lost his land there. Similarly the introduction of Indian culture to Cambodia is attributed to the *brāhmaṇa* Kaundinya who married a Cambodian princess.

Many historians of the early twentieth century derived their models of Indian contacts with Southeast Asia from European expansion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and postulated the establishment of Indian colonies in Southeast Asia ruled by Indian dynasts. At a slightly later date in the interpretive process, the emphasis shifted to colonies of settlement rather than conquest. A strong proponent of this view was R.C. Majumdar and many other historians whose works were sponsored by the Greater India Society. Prominent among these were K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and B. Chhabra. For them the acculturation and colonization of Southeast Asia was a harking back to the golden age when India transcended her physical boundaries and a vindication of its own position as a European colony. This view was modified by the suggestion that state formation in Southeast Asia was a result not so much of large-scale colonization but the initiative of a few traders who impressed the local populace with their cultural achievements, intermarried and transferred their culture to an Indianized elite. It was from these trading settlements that Indian culture spread to other parts of Southeast Asia as postulated by G. Ferrand and N. J. Krom.

As against this theory of social change through trade, J. C. Van Leur argued that it was indigenous initiative that led native rulers to summon *brāhmaṇas* to their courts to legitimize

their rule through brahmanical ceremonies. Indian influence then was no more than "a thin and flaking glaze; underneath it the whole of the indigenous forms has continued to exist." Most later scholars have, however, adopted an intermediate position between these two extremes.

G. Coedes attributed initial Indian expansion to Southeast Asia to a search for gold. The number of sea voyages increased around the beginning of the Christian era and received added impetus from the spread of Buddhism whose liberal rules regarding intermixing of castes were better suited to long-distance trade and sea travel. However, most of the kingdoms founded in Southeast Asia around the middle of the first millennium A.D. adopted the Saivaite conception of royalty which was suitably altered and adapted to local traditions. In this the contribution of the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas* who followed in the wake of commercial interchanges cannot be overlooked. Coedes accepted an equally important role of Southeast Asian traders to India who "settled in colonies in a few large ports in India." As Indian expansion was a phenomenon that touched diverse regions and lasted several centuries, he found it difficult to define the history of Indianization.

B. P. Groslier also gave equal emphasis to both the giving and the borrowing cultures, while P. Mus stressed the shared substratum beneath both Indian and indigenous cultural tradition that made borrowing possible. Quaritch Wales emphasized "native genius" but also accepted a marked dominance of Indian influence in the western part of Southeast Asia from where it diffused eastwards.

H. B. Sarkar (1985) defended the work of earlier Indian scholars of the Greater India Society and traced the beginnings of trans-oceanic trade based on the similarities of numerous beads found at sites in Malaya, Java, northern Borneo, Indonesia and the Philippines with those from the megalithic burials of peninsular India. This bead trade continued in the early centuries A.D. as evidenced by the finds from Arikamedu and Oc-Eo. Imports included sandalwood referred to in the *Arthaśāstra* and tin which according to Patañjali was brought by the overland route. Without a critical analysis of early Chinese texts, Sarkar accepts the establishment of the so-called

states of Tun-Sun and P'an-P'an in the Malay peninsula and that of Funan in Kampuchea in the early centuries A.D. with large settlements of *brāhmaṇas* from India. As in the case of Funan or Borneo/Kalimantan, he takes the Sanskritized names of the rulers to indicate that "Indian adventurers directly installed themselves in power." Thus he attributes the foundation of the early states to the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas*. "In the trail of these people came traders and other people of lower ranks in large numbers." This uncritical acceptance of Chinese and Indian literary sources continues to influence much of the writing on Southeast Asia. It has been shown that the use of the term 'state' for the early polities of Southeast Asia is a misnomer as these were more in the nature of chiefdoms involved in a shifting and ever-changing balance of power in the region (Wheatley 1983, 120-3).

While reviewing the data on contacts with Southeast Asia, I. W. Mabbett looks afresh at the process of Sanskritization within the Indian subcontinent and draws a distinction between Indian culture as represented by the dominant Sanskrit tradition and the many local cultures that are historically linked to it. He then postulates a somewhat similar process of expansion for Southeast Asia with the caveat that the sea barrier imposed its own limitations. "In the absence of large dominating communities of Indians, the elite consisted very largely of the people from communities being Sanskritized rather than of agents of Sanskritization, for these were handfuls of individuals marrying into the local population. This complicated the transference of the caste system." In this sense there is a false dichotomy that has been created between Indian dominance and local genius. What should be looked at is Indian cultural influence as adopted in different regions of Southeast Asia.

Two scholars who have had a profound influence on Southeast Asian studies are O. W. Wolters and P. Wheatley. Wolters (1982) raises the question of 'localization' and the need to define specific local cultures that existed prior to the coming of foreign cultural elements and the extent to which foreign elements were adopted and restated by indigenous cultures. Linked to this is the analysis of developments in the sub-regions of Southeast Asia as a result of which foreign elements

dominated in certain areas, while in others they were subsumed.

Wheatley analyses in great detail the development of urban centres in the different subregions of Southeast Asia and the processes through which they evolved. Archaeological data attests a degree of political centralization and social ranking indicative of a chiefdom level of society in the major river valleys of Southeast Asia around the beginning of the Christian era. There is also increasing evidence for the presence of trading networks at this time. Wheatley argues that in this system of competing ruling elites, a paramount chief is likely to have taken recourse to any expedient to enhance his authority, thereby increasing his share of the profits of the commerce. One such expedient that would have been profitable was for the chief to identify himself with an Indian deity "potentially more efficacious than the traditional territorial spirit of the tribe." A favourite choice in the early centuries A.D. was Siva. Fourth century A.D. inscriptions of King Bhadravarman indicate the dominance of the cult of Siva-Uma at the royal court of Campa. Similar data for Saiva centres in central Thailand and central Java are also forthcoming. The Irrawaddy valley seems to be the exception where traces of Saivism are very sparse and of uncertain implication. Thus Saivite devotionalism which was a cultural borrowing helped in the consolidation and elaboration of the structure of authority relationships in strategically situated regions of Southeast Asia and it is this that ultimately led to the emergence of divine kingship.

As a prelude to a reappraisal of Southeast Asian contacts, Ray (1989) traces the historical development of maritime trade networks in the region. Archaeological and inscriptional data from coastal sites in the Indian subcontinent indicates the existence of coastal sailing networks in the second half of the first millenium B.C. Commodities involved included semiprecious stones, gold, horses, pearls, gems, diamonds and so on. Contemporary maritime circuits extending from the Vietnamese coast to the Malay peninsula and the southwest coast of Thailand can also be demarcated on the evidence of the distribution pattern of Dong-Son drums. In addition to the bronze drums, other prestige items included in the exchange

network were bowls of a high-tin bronze. An interesting feature of the location of these metal age sites in the Malay peninsula is their concentration in areas rich in gold and tin and their association with boat burials.

Around the second to first centuries B.C. these regional networks came to overlap and tangible indicators of these contacts are carnelian and glass beads, carnelian seals with Brahmi inscriptions and ivory objects from India found at several sites on the mainland and the west coast of the Malaya peninsula. Commodities obtained from Southeast Asia are much more difficult to identify, though there is a strong case for the import of tin, aromatics and woods into India at this time. These links between South and Southeast Asia continued to expand in the early centuries of the Christian era and provided channels for the transmission of ideas, skills and religious beliefs (Ray, forthcoming).

A somewhat neglected aspect of maritime trade and contacts is the study of ship-building technology. R. Mookerji's study of 1912, though an uncritical collection of textual data, still remains the only comprehensive work on the topic, subsequent papers on the subject being generally confined to particular periods. These include notes by A. L. Basham, V. Mishra, K. V. Hariharan, K. Mitra, Lallanji Gopal, D. Schlingloff, S. R. Rao and H. Sarkar. One of the reasons for this is the nature of the evidence itself. There are no technical treatises on ship-building available for the Early Historical period and any study has to painstakingly piece together information drawn from a variety of literary sources corroborated by details from sculptural representations. There has been little progress in using oral traditions of the seafaring communities for working out a maritime history. Some attempts in this direction were made by James Hornell on the basis of boat designs. Thus, while boat designs of the northwest coast including the regions of Baluchistan, Sindh, Kutch and Kathiawar closely approximate those of Arabia, boat designs along the Konkan show greater variety and are marked by features indigenous to the region.

It is generally accepted that unlike Greek and Roman ships which were built with close-set mortise and tenon joints and nails, the local craft of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the

Indian Ocean were of sewn construction (Hourani). These vessels were constructed of planks of wood fastened together and to the keel by means of stitches of either cords of coir or palm fibre threads. The earliest mention of such vessels is in the first century A.D. *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* which refers to the name of the towns of Azania-Rhapta as derived from the name of sewn boats. It also mentions vessels called *madarata* being built at Omana—the term being related to the Arabic word *maddarr'at* meaning fastened with palm fibre. The most famous example of the sewn tradition on the Indian coast is the *masula* of the Coromandel coast. There does not seem to be unanimity on when the use of wooden tenons and dowels was introduced to keep the planks in place. It has often been argued that inserted frames were not introduced into the Indian Ocean till Classical times. On the contrary, depictions of vessels at Sanchi and on Sātavāhana coins show vessels with a crisp shape that is generally associated with internal framing.

The *Periplus* also mentions the *kotumba* and *trappaga* used for piloting merchant vessels into Bharuch. These terms have been identified with present-day *kotia* generally under 200 tons. For Indian trading vessels, the *Periplus* uses the terms *sangara* and *kolandiophonta* the former described as a double canoe made from two hollowed-out tree trunks, while the latter was probably a two-masted vessel perhaps with an outrigger, a counterpart of the Sinhalese *yatra oruwa*.

Ancient Indian literature provides very little information on the dimensions or carrying capacity of ships and generally a stereotype of 500 or 700 passengers is referred to. Pliny estimates that vessels from south India had a capacity of 300 amphorae or approximately 75 tons and this figure would compare favourably with contemporary ships.

The texts indicate that the ships' hulls were made of boards and the mast was hoisted when the vessels put out to sea. There are references to three-masted ships, a fact confirmed by depictions on Sātavāhana coins. Several terms have been used for a steering oar, though its exact position is somewhat vague, permanently fixed oar-blades fastened to the ship's stern being later inventions. An anchor was used to bring stability to the ship and there is mention of the use of shore-

sighting birds for navigation. Sails in eastern waters were made of matting, sometimes made in strips and sewn together, while at other times they were made in enormous sections. The Arabs were the first to use cloth sails widely (Schlingloff 1982, 1988).

In conclusion it should be reiterated that there are several lacunae in our understanding of Early Historical trade. There has been little contribution from archaeological studies in this area so far, and these could be usefully tapped and developed further. The gaps in our knowledge are much wider as regards coastal and maritime trade. This is a topic which needs to be pursued much more seriously than has been the case till now.

Bibliography

Adhya G. L. 1966. *Early Indian Economics* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House).

Bagchi P. C. 1955. *India and Central Asia* (Calcutta : National Council of Education).

Basham A. L. 1949. "Notes on Seafaring in Ancient India." *Art and Letters*, 60-71.

Belshaw C. 1965. *Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets* (New Jersey : Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs).

Begley V. 1988. "Rouletted Ware at Arikamedu : A New Approach." *American Journal of Archaeology*, 92, 427-439.

—— and R. D. De Puma (ed.) 1992. *Rome and India—the Ancient Sea Trade* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Bernard P. 1967. "Ai Khanum on the Oxus : A Hellenistic City in Central Asia." *Proceedings of the British Academy* LIII, 71-95.

Bernardi A. 1970. "The Economic Problems of the Roman Empire at the Time of Its Decline." In Cipolla, Carlo M. (ed.), *The Economic Decline of Empires* (London : Methuen & Co.).

Bohannon P. and G. Dalton 1968. *Markets in Africa* (Netherlands : Northwestern University Press).

Casson L. 1980. "Rome's Trade with the East : The Sea Voyage to Africa and India." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 110, 21-36.

—— 1988. "Rome's Maritime Trade with the Far East." *The American Neptune* XLVIII, 149-53.

Chhabra B. Ch. 1935. "Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture during Pallava Rule as Evidenced by Inscriptions." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters* 1, 1-64.

Chakraborti H. 1966. *Trade and Commerce of Ancient India* (Calcutta : Academic Publishers).

Charlesworth M. P. 1951. "Roman Trade with India : A Resurvey." Coleman-Norton, (ed.), *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History* (Princeton : Princeton University Press).

Clark G. 1986. *Symbols of Excellence* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Coedes G. 1968. *The Indianized States of South-east Asia*, East-West Centre (first published in Hanoi in 1944 in French).

Dani A. H. 1981. *Karakorum Highway Unfolds the Romance of the Past* (Islamabad : Barqsons Printers).

—— 1983. *Chilas*, the author, Islamabad.

Darian S. G. 1970. "The Economic History of the Ganges to the End of Gupta Times." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* XIII, 62-87.

—— 1977. "Commerce on the Ganges between the Mauryan and the Gupta Period." *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth* XXXVII, 1-9.

Das D. R. 1969. *Economic History of the Deccan*, Munshiram Manoharlal.

Deshpande M. N. 1981. "Trade Routes in Ancient India." *Science Today*, February, 34-9.

Dihle A. 1964. "The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 190 N. S., 15-23.

Eggermont P.H.L. 1966. "The Murundas and the Ancient Trade Route from Taxila to Ujjain." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* IX, 257-96.

Ferrand G. 1919. "Le K'ouen-louen et les anciennes navigations interoceaniques dans les mers du sud." *Journal Asiatique* 13 : 239-333, 431-92; 14 : 6-68, 201-41.

Fried M. 1967. *The Evolution of Political Society* (New York : Random House).

Fussman G. 1987. "Chroniques et eludes bibliographiques." *Journal Asiatique* 3-4, CCLXXV, 333-99.

Gledhill J., M. Larsen 1982. "The Polanyi Paradigm and a Dynamic Analysis of Archaic States." In Renfrew Rowland M. J. and Segraves B. A. (ed), *Theory and Explanation in Archaeology* (New York : Academic Press).

Glover I. 1989. *Early Trade between India and Southeast Asia - A Link in the Development of a World Trading System*, Occasional Papers, Centre for South-East Asian Studies, University of Hull.

Gopalachari K. 1972. *Early History of the Andhra Country* (Madras : University of Madras).

Groslier B. P. 1960. "Our Knowledge of Khmer Civilization : a reappraisal." *Journal of the Siam Society* XLVIII, 1-28.

Guillaume O. 1986. "An Analysis of the Modes of Reconstruction of the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek history." *Studies in History* II, 1, 1-16.

—— 1990. *Analysis of Reasonings in Archaeology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Hariharan K. V. 1956. "Sea Dangers in Early Indian Seafaring." *Journal of Indian History* 34, 313-20.

Heitzmann J. 1984. "Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire." In Kennedy K.A.R. and Possehl, G.L. (ed), *Studies in the Archaeology and Palaeo-anthropology of South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH).

Hodder I. 1974. "Regression Analysis of Some Trade and Marketing Patterns." *World Archaeology* 6, 172-89.

—— 1982. "Towards a Contextual Approach to Prehistoric exchange." In Ericson J. E. and Earle T. K., (ed), *Contexts for Prehistoric Exchange* (New York: Academic Press).

Hornell J. 1918-23. "The Origin and Ethnological Significance of Indian Boat Designs." *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* VII, 139-256.

Hourani G. F. 1951. *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Hughes I. 1977. "New Guinea Stone Age Trade." *Terra Australis* 3.

Jettmar K. 1982. *Rockcarvings and Inscriptions in the Northern Areas of Pakistan*, Islamabad.

Jha D. N. 1980. *Studies in Early Indian Economic History* (Delhi: Anupama Publications).

Kipp R. S. and E. M. Schortman 1989. "The Political Impact of Trade in Chiefdoms." *American Anthropologist* 91, 2, 370-385.

Kosambi D. D. 1962. "At the Crossroads: A study of Mother Goddess cult sites and pilgrim's progress, a contribution to the prehistory of the Western Deccan Plateau", *Myth and Reality* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan).

—— 1981. *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India.* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House).

Krom N. J. 1931. *Hindoe-javaansche qeschiedenis*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Nijhoff).

Lallanji Gopal 1962. "Art of Ship-Building and Navigation in

Ancient India." *Journal of Indian History* 40, 313-27.

Levi-Strauss C. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London : Eyre and Spottiswoode).

Liu X. 1988. *Ancient India and Ancient China* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Mabbett I. W. 1977. "The Indianization of South-east Asia." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* VII, 1-14, 143-161.

Majumdar R. C. 1927. *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East, Vol. 1 : Champa*, Lahore.

—— 1938. *Vol. 2 : Suvarnadvipa* (Calcutta : Modern Publishing Syndicate).

—— 1944. *Hindu Colonies in the Far East* (Calcutta : Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya).

Maloney C. 1968. *The Effect of Early Coastal Sea Traffic on the Development of Civilization in South India, Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Pennsylvania.

Margabandhu C. 1965. "Trade Contacts between Western India and the Graeco-Roman World in the Early Centuries of the Christian Era." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* VIII, 316-22.

Marshall J. 1951. *Taxila* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Mauss M. 1974. *The Gift* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul), (First published 1925).

Meillassoux C. (ed.) 1971. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London : Oxford University Press).

Mill J. and H. H. Wilson 1840-6. *The History of British India*, Vol. 1. (London : James Madden & Co.).

Miller J. I. 1969. *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire* (Oxford : Clarendon Press).

Mishra V. 1954. "Sea and Land Routes in India as Revealed in the Buddhist Literature." *Journal of Indian History* 32, 117-129.

Mitra K. 1957. "Sea-Voyage in Jaina Folk-Lore." *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 43, 291-298.

Mookerji R. 1912. *Indian Shipping* (London : Longmans).

Morgan L. H. 1851. *League of the Iroquois*, (Rochester : Saga and Brother).

Moti Chandra 1953. *Sarthavaha* (in Hindi), Patna.

———— 1977. *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India* (Delhi: Abhinav).

Mukherjee B. N. 1969. *Nana on Lion* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society).

———— 1970. *The Economic Factors in Kushana History* (Calcutta: Pilgrim Publishers).

———— 1980-81. "Revenue, Trade and Society in the Kusana Empire." *Indian Historical Review* 7, 1-2, 24-53.

———— 1982. *Kushana Silver Coinage* (Calcutta: Indian Museum).

———— 1989. "Decipherment of the Kharoshthi-Brahmi Script." *Asiatic Society Monthly Bulletin* 18, 8 August.

Mus P. 1975. *India Seen from the East*, translated from French (Clayton: Monash University), (First published in French in 1933).

Narain A. K. 1980. *The Indo-Greeks* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), (First published 1957).

Nash M. 1966. *Primitive and Peasant Economic Systems* (San Francisco: Chandler).

Nilakanta Sastri K. A. 1978. *South India and Southeast Asia* (Mysore: Geetha).

Polanyi K., C. M. Arensberg, and H. W. Pearson (ed.) 1957. *Trade and Market in the Early Empires* (New York: The Free Press).

Prasad Kameshwar 1984. *Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kusanas* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).

Quaritch Wales H. G. 1951. *The Making of Greater India* (London: B. Quaritch).

Ramachandran K. S. 1970. "Ancient Indian Maritime Ventures." In L. Chandra *et al.* (eds.), *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, Madras.

Rao S. R. 1970. "Shipping in Ancient India." In L. Chandra *et al.* (eds.), *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture* (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee).

Raschke M. G. 1978. "New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischer Welt* (Berlin: de Gruyter).

Rawlinson H. G. 1916. *Intercourse between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Ray H. P. 1986. *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Sātavāhanas* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

—— 1988. "Yavana Presence in Ancient India." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31, 311-325.

—— 1989. "Early Maritime Contacts between South and Southeast Asia." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20, 42-54.

—— 1989a. "Early Historical Trade—An overview." *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 26, 4.

—— 1989b. "Early Historical Settlement in the Deccan: An ecological perspective." *Man and Environment* 14, 1, 103-108.

—— *Buddhism and the Early Maritime Links of South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press) (forthcoming).

Renfrew C. 1975. "Trade as Action at a Distance." In J. A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, (eds.), *Ancient Civilization and Trade* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press).

—— 1977. "Alternative Models for Exchange and Spatial Distribution." In T. K. Earle and J. Ericson, (eds.), *Exchange Systems in Prehistory* (New York: Academic Press).

Sahlins M. 1965. "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange." In M. Bantom, (ed.), *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology* (London: Tavistock).

—— 1968. *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall).

Sarkar H. 1987. "Emergence of Urban Centres in Early Historical Andhradesa." In B. M. Pande and B. D. Chattopadhyaya, (eds.), *Archaeology and History* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).

Sarkar H. B. 1974. "The Travails of Foreign Journey between Eastern India and China in Ancient and Medieval Periods." *Journal of Indian History* 52, 101-127.

—— 1985. *Cultural Relations between India and Southeast Asian Countries* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Cultural Relations).

Sarma I. K. 1980. *Coinage of the Satavahana Empire* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).

Schlingloff D. 1982. "Indische Seefahrt In Roemischer Zeit."

Zur geschichtlichen Bedeutung der fruehen Seefahrt (Munich : Verlag C. H. Beck).

–––––– 1988. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings* (Delhi : Ajanta).

Schmitthener W. 1979. "Rome and India : Aspects of universal history during the principate." *Journal of Roman Studies* 19, 90-106.

Seeley N. J. and P. J. Turner 1984. "Metallurgical Investigations of Three Early Indian coinages : Implications for metal trading and dynastic chronology." In B. Allchin (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1981* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Seneviratne S. 1985. *Social Base of Early Buddhism in Southeast India and Sri Lanka,* Doctoral Dissertation (New Delhi : Jawaharlal Nehru University).

Sharma R. S. 1980. *Indian Feudalism* (2nd ed.) (Delhi : Macmillan India Ltd.).

–––––– 1983. *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

–––––– 1987. *Urban Decay in India* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Sharma R. S. and D. N. Jha "The Economic History of India up to A.D. 1200 : Trends and Prospects." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, 48-80.

Smith V. 1958. *The Oxford History of India* (Oxford : Clarendon Press), (First published in 1919).

Shrivastava B. 1968. *Trade and Commerce in Ancient Times* (Varanasi : Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series 180).

Tarn W. W. 1951. *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Thakur V. K. 1981. *Urbanization in Ancient India* (Delhi : Abhinav).

Thorley J. 1969. "The Development of Trade between the Roman Empire and the East under Augustus." *Greece and Rome* 16, 209-223.

Turner P. J. 1984. *Roman and Indigenous Silver Coins in Central and Southern India in the First to Third Centuries A.D.,* Doctoral Dissertation, University of London.

–––––– 1989. *Roman Coins from India* (London : Royal Numismatic Society).

Van Leur J. C. 1955. *Indonesian Trade and Society, Essays in*

Asian Social and Economic History (The Hague: W. Van Hoeve Ltd.).

Warmington E. H. 1928. *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Webb M. C. 1975. "The Flag follows Trade: An essay on the necessary interaction of military and commercial factors in state formation." In J. A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (eds.), *Ancient Civilization and Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).

Wheatley P. 1983. *Nagara and Commandery* (Chicago: University of Chicago).

Wheeler R. E. M. 1955. *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

—— *et. al.* 1946. "Arikamedu: an Indo-Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India." *Ancient India* 2, 17-124.

Wolters O. W. 1982. *History, Culture and Religion in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies).

V

Recent Approaches to the History of Religion in Ancient India

KUNAL CHAKRABARTI

This essay seeks to make a synoptic survey of the trends in research on aspects of early Indian religion, particularly in the last two decades. This is not an overview of all available research on the subject, consisting of a short summary and an exhaustive bibliography. Instead it is a discussion of selected secondary texts which, in my opinion, are representative of different approaches to the study of religion. Much of the conventional fact-gathering variety that dominated the field of religious history during the first half of the century, still persists, but approaches distinctly identifiable by their ideology, method or discipline have started appearing since then, so that it is now possible to make a historiographic survey in these terms. The other discernible trait in the religious history writing in recent years is the tendency to isolate the constituent elements of a religious complex such as rituals, myths, deities and so on, and focus attention on a particular aspect of it. This indeed is an artificial categorization which suffers from a certain overlap with the other elements, but it has its advantages also in a greater coherence and internal unity of the subject matter. I have therefore organized this chapter along these two lines. The choice of texts is necessarily a little personal, but my emphasis on Purāṇic literature is not altogether arbitrary, for much work has recently been done on them, and it is comparatively easy to perceive the shifts in the method and content of their study.

Before we pass on to the studies on ancient Indian religion proper, it is essential to have a look at the major developments

in the field of history of religions *per se*, in order to gain a meaningful methodological perspective. Mircea Eliade considers 1912 to be the watershed year in the history of the scientific study of religion. In that year Durkheim published his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*; Wilhelm Schmidt finished the first volume of his monumental study of religion; Raffaele Pettazoni brought out his first important monograph on the primitive religion of Sardinia; Jung published his study of symbols, and Freud was correcting the proofs of *Totem and Taboo*, to be issued in the following year. Together they constituted the four different approaches to the study of religion : sociological, ethnological, psychological and historical. The other potentially new approach, that of the phenomenology of religion, was not to be attempted for another ten years.

For Durkheim, religion was a projection of social experience. He concluded that sacredness and the social group are one and the same thing. Durkheim's explanation of the nature and origin of religion was emphatically criticized by many ethnologists who claimed that the simplest tribes do not have clans and totems. Nevertheless many of Durkheim's associates produced important works in this area. Lucien Levy-Bruhl, propagated the notion of primitive mentality. He claimed that the primitive is engaged in a sort of *participation mystique* with the surrounding world, and an understanding of this type of pre-logical mind helps the modern scholar to grasp the meaning and function of symbols and myths and ultimately of archaic religions. This hypothesis was challenged by the ethnologists and the research of M. Griaulle for example, who worked on the esoteric mythological tradition of the Dogon, revealed an amazing capacity for systematic speculation and not the childish lucubrations expected from a pre-logical mentality. Among other sociologists who made significant contributions to the understanding of the religious life of non-literate societies, special reference should be made of Lévi-Strauss's writings on totemism, the structure of myth and the operations of the savage mind. Parallel to Durkheim's influence was the impact of the sociology of religion in the strict sense of the term as exemplified by Max Weber, Talcott Parsons and Joachim Wach." Wach felt the necessity of taking the sociological conditioning of religious life and social

contexts of religious expressions into serious consideration, although he rejected the extremist view, such as that of Durkheim, that religious life is an epiphenomenon of social structure. The sociology of religion has brought important contributions to the general science of religion. Sociological data help the historian scholar to understand the living context of his documents and protect him against the temptation of abstract interpretations.

For Freud, religion as well as human society and culture in general started with a primordial murder. Freud believed that the earliest communities consisted of an adult male and a number of females and immature individuals, the males among the latter being driven off by the head of the group as they became old enough to evoke his jealousy. The expelled sons finally killed their father, ate him and appropriated the females. Freud wrote that the totemic banquet was the repetition of this noteworthy criminal deed, with which so much began—the organization of society, moral restrictions and religion. For Freud therefore, God was nothing other than the sublimated physical father of human beings. Freud's interpretation has been criticized and rejected by ethnologists who point out that totemism is not to be found at the beginnings of religion, it is not universal, the pre-totemic people know nothing of cannibalism and the form of pre-totemic family is neither general promiscuity nor group marriage. Psychoanalysts, particularly those with an anthropological training, such as Geza Roheim have, however, proposed from time to time new sets of ethnological arguments. Jung, on the other hand, was impressed by the presence of transpersonal, universal forces in the depth of the psyche. It was mainly the striking similarities between the myths and symbols of widely separated peoples and civilizations that forced Jung to postulate the existence of a collective unconscious, the contents of which manifest themselves through what he called 'archetypes'. In order to judge the contribution of psychoanalysis to the understanding of religion, one must distinguish between its main discovery, namely, that of the unconscious and of the method of psychoanalysis, and the actual theoretical views on the origin and structure of religious life by its various exponents. The discovery of the unconscious

encouraged the study of symbols and myths and has drawn the attention of the historian of religions to the significance of the fact that images and symbols communicate their messages even if the conscious mind remains unaware of it.

Wilhelm Schmidt's ethnological researches eventually paved the way for the development of the comparatively young discipline of anthropology and particularly in conditioning its attitude towards religion. Schmidt was strongly impressed by Andrew Lang's discovery of the High Gods among the oldest primitive cultures. At the same time Schmidt understood that such a decisive question cannot be answered without first using a solid historical method which would enable one to distinguish and clarify the historical stratification in the so-called primitive cultures. The historical stratification allowed him to separate the archaic traditions from subsequent influences, which must be considered an important methodological advance. What cannot be accepted in Schmidt's reconstruction, however, is his exclusively rationalistic approach which asserts that primitive man discovered the idea of God through a logical quest for a cause. Schmidt's work encouraged contributions to the knowledge of archaic religions, particularly in the writings of such anthropologists as Kroeber, Kluckhohn, Redfield and Benedict. The orientation of the British social anthropologists is exemplified by the works of Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard and Raymond Firth. Their studies show that anthropology is no longer considered the key to such great and final problems as the origin and growth of religion. Instead it is concerned with intensive study of the actual functioning of a given society.

The history of the science of religion received another decisive thrust in the work of Pettazoni who regarded himself primarily as a historian, meaning that he viewed religion as a purely historical phenomenon and accepted exclusively historical methods and presuppositions. He rightly insisted on the historicity of every religious creation and aimed to articulate the results of the different investigations within a general perspective. The only problem with Pettazoni's method was that the exclusive concentration on origin and development of a religion reduced the hermeneutical enquiry to a purely historiographical work. That is why at the end of his

career he strongly emphasized the complementarity of phenomenology and history.[1]

Van der Leeuw may be said to be the father of the phenomenology of religion in the sense that in his descriptions he respected the religious data and their specific intention. He pointed out the irreducibility of religious representations to social, psychological or rational functions and rejected those naturalistic prejudices which seek to explain religion by something other than itself. For him, the main task of the phenomenology of religions is to illumine the inner structures of religious phenomena. However, Leeuw was not interested in the history of religious structures and thus never attempted a religious morphology. Here lies the most serious inadequacy of this approach, for even the most elevated religious expression presents itself through specific structures and cultural expressions. The different historical schools, who treat religion as exclusively a historical fact without any transhistorical meaning or value, have therefore reacted strongly against the phenomenologists' claim that they can grasp the essence and the structure of religious phenomena. The present debate in the history of religion is occupied with a search for a broader perspective in which the two methodological approaches could be integrated.

Studies in ancient Indian religion made a modest beginning with Henry Thomas Colebrook's exploratory essay on aspects of the *Vedas*, published in 1805. Colebrook actually had very little to say about Vedic religion as such, and his effort did not encourage further research on the subject for quite some time. He of course inadvertently set the trend for research in Indian religion, for Vedic studies remained the central preoccupation of the majority of scholars throughout the nineteenth century. Critical scholarship in Vedic religion may be said to have begun with Eugene Burnouf and students inspired by him, particularly Roth in 1846, Felix Neve in 1847

---

1 Hermeneutics is the theory of understanding or interpretation of philosophical, literary and religious texts, and phenomenology of religion involves orderly study of religious phenomena, setting aside all assumptions about the truth or falsity of specific beliefs and reality of commonly supposed objects of religious experience. The task of the historian of religion is not merely to trace the evolution of a religion but also to describe its essential meaning. Both are equally important and therefore complement one another.

and Adalbert Kuhn in 1859 who initiated the study of Vedic mythology. The next half century was more or less completely dominated by Max Müller who laid the foundations of the science of religion in Indian studies. A comparative mythologist, Müller based his theories on three assumptions: (i) a common Indo-European pantheon of gods; (ii) mythology was made up of natural ,phenomena translated into the language of myths, and (iii) etymologizing the names of the Vedic gods helped to illumine their character and to establish their counterparts in other Indo-European mythologies. Müller influenced a generation of scholars among whom special mention should be made of Angelo Gubernatis. A reaction to the emphasis on the method of comparative mythology was also evident in the writings of John Muir and Abel Bergaigne. Muir insisted that Vedic religion should be studied primarily from Vedic sources and Bergaigne proposed that the meaning of a Vedic word should be appraised from its varied usage within the Vedic corpus itself. But on the whole a great majority of works on Vedic religion continued to be influenced by Max Müller's approach. Even A. A. MacDonell's seminal study of Vedic mythology and A. B.. Keith's monumental volumes on Vedic religion and philosophy broadly fall within this category. The two late nineteenth-century Russian scholars Ovsyaniko Kulikovsky and Dimitry Kudryavsky who studied the cult of the god Soma and Vedic domestic rituals respectively from the point of view of the social developments of the Aryans, remain isolated instances of a different set of enquiry. In fact, a hundred and fifty years' history of Vedic studies has done little to bring about a significant change in its perspective. Barring a few exceptions, recent works on Vedic religion, mostly by Indian scholars such as Jogiraj Basu and G. V. Devasthali on the *Brāhmaṇas*, Usha Choudhuri and Usha Grover on aspects of Vedic mythology and symbolism, conform to the broad pattern of rich data base but absence of meaningful conceptual framework.

Studies on Purāṇic religion have also acquired a common pattern ever since the publication of H. H. Wilson's pioneering study of the religious sects of the Hindus in 1846. Broadly speaking, works on these subjects trace the evolution of the two great sectarian deities Viṣṇu and Śiva from the Vedic to

the Purāṇic accounts. Occasionally they also take cognizance of archaeological remains, but by and large they are dry compilations of facts, very often inept and generally repetitive. Wilson's primary concern was collection of data. His account may appear somewhat superficial today, but within the limitations of his period he presented a fairly accurate account of the state of Purāṇic religion. With A. Barth's *Religions of India* in 1882, Monier William's *Religious Thought and Life in India* in 1895 and Charles Eliot's *Hinduism and Buddhism* in 1921 we come across a far more systematic account of the Purāṇic sects. However a landmark was established with the publication of R. G. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other Minor Sects* in 1913. For the first time he carefully utilized all available evidence—literary and epigraphic—to write a complete history of Purāṇic religion including origin, stages of evolution and internal relationship between the subsects. H. C. Raychaudhuri's *Material for the Study of the Early History of Vaiṣṇavism*, published in 1920, makes use of the same critical apparatus, but in addition, evaluates previous works on the subject. Most of the later studies have moved within the framework set by them and even sometimes degenerated into a mere rehash of existing knowledge. There are indeed examples of significant exceptions to this general tenor. For instance, Jan Gonda's monograph on early Viṣṇuism (1954), Sukumari Bhattacharji's work on a comparative analysis of the historical growth of Viṣṇu and Śiva through the millennia (1978) and the collection of essays on the Jagannātha cult and the regional tradition of Orissa edited by A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G. C. Tripathi (1978) represent high analytical rigour and precise textual scholarship. Of late there has been a growing realization of the value of epigraphic material for a reconstruction of religious history. V. S. Pathak's study of Śaiva cults and Urmila Bhagowalia's study of Vaiṣṇavism in early medieval north India are good examples of this awareness. They at the same time illustrate the dominant trend in the comparatively better variety of research on Indian religion — painstaking empiricism.

The first major departure from this general historiographic pattern was made by the Marxist writings on the subject. For Marx, religion was an expression of man's imperfect self-

awareness : not man as an abstract individual, but social man or the human collective. It was a distortion of man's being because society was distorted. Accordingly, Marx felt that what was needed was an analysis of the human conditions and relations which made religion indispensable to mankind. Marxists therefore believe that forms of religious behaviour are ultimately dependent upon the material conditions in which they take shape and that in order to understand a particular form of such behaviour it is essential to study its specific socio-economic context.

The first significant contribution to the study of ancient Indian religions from a Marxist point of view came from a philosopher Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya (1978, originally published in 1959), whose study of ancient Indian materialism as reflected in its religion and philosophy has strongly influenced some of the historian's attitude towards the Indian religious tradition. A summary of Chattopadhyaya's explanation of the Indian mother-right may serve as an example of his method of study. Chattopadhyaya contends that mother-right gives the only possible background for understanding the sources of Tantrism, a conspicuous feature of which happens to be its supreme emphasis on the female principle. According to Chattopadhyaya therefore it reflected the social condition under which women held a more important place in society than men. He further argues that, because agriculture was the discovery of women, the initial stage of the agricultural economy created the material conditions for the social superiority of the female. By contrast, the economic life of the early Vedic people was predominantly pastoral. That accounts for their highly patriarchal society along with a characteristically male-dominated outlook. Thus, according to Chattopadhyaya, mother-right in India was historically connected with the early agricultural economy which was subsequently suppressed and now retains its existence primarily as a tribal survival.

D. D. Kosambi, the acknowledged father of Marxist history writing in India, had made scattered observations on various aspects of religion in his effort to capture the evolutionary contours of Indian civilization in all its diversity. But a specialized monograph devoted to the study of religion,

though in an extended sense of the term, came towards the end of his career (1962). Kosambi displays an astonishing range, bringing a study of the Urvaśī-Pururavas myth and the village community in the old conquests of Goa within the same format. I will, however, concentrate on his analysis of the social and economic aspects of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, as an illustration of his understanding of the role of religious ideology in the process of the formation of Indian culture. The *Gītā* has been variously interpreted by all sorts of people, beginning with the religious philosophers of the early medieval period to the political leaders of the twentieth century, arriving at wildly divergent conclusions. Kosambi therefore argued that practically anything can be read into the *Gītā* by a determined person, without denying the validity of a class system. The reason is that the *Gītā* furnished the one scriptural source which could be used without violence to accepted brahmin methodology, to draw inspiration and justification for social actions in some way disagreeable to the ruling class upon whose mercy the brahmins depended. The technique that Kṛṣṇa adopts in unfolding his philosophy of action without expectation in the *Gītā* is to set out each preceding doctrine in a sympathetic way without dissecting it and skilfully pass on to another as Arjuna asks an uncomfortable question. Thus we have a review-synthesis of many schools of thought which were in many respects mutually incompatible. The incompatibility is never brought out; all views are simply facets of the one divine mind. The best in each system is thus derived naturally from the high God. Indeed, the utility of the *Gītā* derives from its peculiar fundamental defect, namely, dexterity in seeming to reconcile the irreconcilable. Kosambi explains that such a dovetailing of the superstructure is possible only when the underlying differences are not too great. Thus, the *Gītā* was a logical performance for the early Gupta period—the time of its composition[2]—when expanding

---

2 It is difficult to assert with any degree of certainty the precise period of composition of such anonymous texts as the *Gītā*. The composition of the *Mahābhārata* is believed to have begun towards the fourth century B.C. and its final revision took place sometime in the fourth century A.D. Theoretically, therefore, the *Gītā* could have been written any time between these two dates, and it has been specifically suggested by many that it was composed during the first century B.C.

village settlements brought in new wealth to a powerful central government, when trade was again on the increase and many sects could obtain economic support in plenty. To treat all views tolerantly and to merge them into one implies that the crisis in the means of production is not too acute. Fusion and tolerance, however, become impossible when the crisis deepens, when there is not enough of the surplus product to go around, and the synthetic method does not lead to increased production. The *Gītā* might help reconcile certain factions of the ruling class. Its inner contradictions could stimulate some exceptional reformer to make the upper classes admit a new reality of recruiting new members. But it could not possibly bring about any fundamental change in the means of production, nor could its fundamental lack of contact with reality and disdain for logical consistency promote a rational approach to the basic problem of Indian society. But, Kosambi adds, the *Gītā* did contain one innovation which precisely fitted the needs of a later period : *bhakti* or personal devotion. *Bhakti* was the justification, the one way of deriving all views from a single divine source. With the end of the great centralized personal empires in sight, the new state had to be feudal all the way through. The essence of fully developed feudalism is the chain of personal loyalty; not loyalty in the abstract but with a secure foundation in the means and relations of production. To hold this type of society and its state together, the best religion is one which emphasises the role of *bhakti*, personal faith, even though the object of devotion may have clearly visible flaws. And the *Gītā* suited the need admirably.

Suvira Jaiswal's monograph on the early history of Vaiṣṇavism (1981, originally published in 1967) is perhaps the only major Marxist work of significance which purports to study religious phenomena in the overall context of material setting, without ever losing the historical perspective. According to Jaiswal, Vaiṣṇavism was a development of Bhāgavatism, the cult of *bhagavat* Nārāyaṇa, which through a process of synthesis and absorption, became one of the most influential religions of the Gupta period. History of the god Nārāyaṇa, Jaiswal says, provides an outstanding example of the origin and evolution of the conception of a god developing out of

the primitive tribal life and linked inseparably with the social and material conditions of the time. Practices and usages which appear shocking to a later sense of propriety are often rationalized as mere symbolism, ignoring the fact that symbolism also arises out of material foundations, which had some real practical significance at the time of their origin. Thus Jaiswal argues that the *pañcarātra sattra*[3] of Nārāyaṇa was actually the ritual of human-sacrifice lasting for five days. It was rooted in the basic necessity to provide for food which required the collective effort of the whole community. Hence it was described as *sattra*, a communal sacrifice. Nārāyaṇa, who represented the entire tribal settlement, was the *bhagavat*, the owner and dispenser of communal wealth and was closely associated with agriculture. Similarly *bhakta* was originally a sharer of the communal wealth mainly consisting of food, and as a member of the tribe he belonged to Nārāyaṇa. In course of time, the gulf between the tribal body and the individual member widened and *bhagavat* Nārāyaṇa became a transcendental supramundane god and a *bhakta*, his devotee. With break up of tribal society the ties of kinship lost their force and the *varṇa* oriented social organization established new relations based on devotion, subordination and loyalty. The confrontation of the old and the new created a division in the form of Nārāyaṇa worship, and in the early centuries of the Christian era Pañcarātra and Bhāgavatism emerged as two different sects of the Vaiṣṇavas. The Pañcarātra clung to ancient rituals and practices in some form and spurned the *varṇa* distinctions, while Bhāgavatism, through the identifica-

3 *Pañcarātra* as a name of the worshippers of Nārāyaṇa occurs for the first time in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata*, and the section also speaks of Nārāyaṇa as *pañcarātrika*. Apparently the epithet should mean the performer of the *pañcarātra* sacrifice mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, and this indicates the source from which the designation of his devotees is derived. Several scholars have attempted to explain the term, basing their arguments on the authority of the extant *Pañcarātra* literature, but the *Pañcarātra Saṁhitās* and other sacred work of this class are themselves confused about the real meaning of the word and contain contradictory statements. Hence Jaiswal concludes that *Pañcarātra* originally meant human-sacrifices with which Nārāyaṇa was connected. With the progress of time the character of Nārāyaṇa changed, and the ritual killing of man was abandoned, but the name clung to the followers of Nārāyaṇa and it is in this sense that it is used in the *Mahābhārata*.

tion of the non-Vedic Nārāyaṇa with the Vedic Viṣṇu, became a part of the brahmanical ideology and was adopted by the ruling class. The alliance of the worship of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva with that of Nārāyaṇa was the most significant event in the history of the cult. These two popular divinities of the fourth century B.C. were originally associate gods of the tribal goddess Ekānaṁśā, but the transition of the Vṛṣṇi tribe from matrilineality to patriarchy produced a corresponding change in the deities it worshipped. The initiative towards the assimilation of these cults into Bhāgavatism may have been taken as early as the second century B.C. by some progressive priests to combat Buddhism, but the real stimulus came from the double threat to the existing social order caused by the influx of foreign hordes and the rise of new economic factors leading to an improvement in the condition of the lower *varṇas*. To restore the social equilibrium and re-establish the sanctity of the brahmanical way of life, the two popular gods were identified with Nārāyaṇa so that brahmanical precepts of social and moral conduct could reach the masses through their worship. The epics and the *Purāṇas*, in which Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu reach their culmination of cultic integration, became an excellent vehicle of diffusing these new ideas.

The corpus of Marxist writings on ancient Indian religion is regrettably small and it may be observed that the three monographs discussed here were all written before the time-frame we set for ourselves, that is, the last two decades of this century. As a result, the recent sophistication in the Marxist method of analysis is yet to enrich our understanding of India's religious history and the few that exist suffer from the conventions of orthodox, almost conservative Marxist approach to religion. Chattopadhyaya's analysis, for instance, is a good example of the tendency to reduce all religious ideology to a direct reflection or a mere consequence of material condition. Apart from the fact that his basic premise that the ascendance of the female principle in a school of philosophical thought "could only be the reflection" (1978, 232) of the social supremacy of the female, is factually questionable, it posits too simplistic a correspondence for a very complex set of relationships. It is interesting to note that another Marxist scholar N. N. Bhattacharyya (1975, 112-113)

virtually echoes Chattopadhyaya in his equation of women, earth and origin of agriculture, in connection with his discussion on the fertility rites in ancient India. Kosambi's otherwise admirable study of *Bhagavad-Gītā* also displays similar tendencies, though to a much lesser degree. Besides, prompted by the same attitude, when Kosambi describes Kṛṣṇa's "plagiarist" review-synthesis of the apparently irreconcilable preceding schools of thought as an example of "slippery opportunism" of the "demonic god" (1962, 16-17), he is making value judgements that a historian is not necessarily called upon to express. Jaiswal's book is very firmly rooted in history and is therefore comparatively less afflicted with such deterministic assumptions, but even she cannot help suggesting a certain brahmanical intrigue in the coming together of the Vaiṣṇava faith and ritual in their present form. Particularly in such assertions as the one that the great epic is a revised version of a popular poem redacted by a group of *diaskeuasts* "who worked according to a precise plan for a set purpose" (1981, 232), the conspiracy theory clearly comes through. But of course, she is dictated by her sources which make the adoption of such a position nearly unavoidable. In the more recent writings on Indian religion, however, one does notice a tendency to move away from this implied acceptance of historical inevitability. Kosambi had elsewhere explained (1957) the sectarian conflict in early medieval eastern India in terms of possession and exploitation of land alone. He wrote that the followers of Śiva or Devī were for a long time great landlords while the worshippers of Viṣṇu were small producers: "theological conflict developed only because economic conflict was a reality" (1 : iii). B.N.S. Yadav (1973), a Marxist historian himself, points out that this view ignores the complexity of religious life in which these various sects themselves were each divided into many groups, none as a whole being exclusively associated with any particular social class. At the same time, Yadav warns us against the danger of making such rigid co-relations in matters of religion. But such examples are rare. In a recent collection of articles R. N. Nandi (1986) focuses his attention on the impact of decaying towns, disintegration of the market economy and the feudal mode of production on such developments in the religious

sphere as the *brāhmaṇa-yajamāna* relations, the beginnings of pilgrimage and origin of Śaivite monasticism. But his emphasis on the role of productive forces in determining the forms of religious expression is so pronounced that religion itself is driven, as it were, to a back seat. While there is no denying that religious institutions or even ideation are to a large extent dependent upon material conditions, it should also be remembered that religion, as man's response to the ultimate reality, has an autonomy and a dynamic of its own than the strict formulae of Marxism might seem to admit.

Ever since the discipline of psychoanalysis came into its own, its founding fathers had concerned themselves with the problems of origin and evolution of religion. But more particularly, they have demonstrated the usefulness of applying the techniques of psychoanalysis in unraveling the hidden significance of myths and symbols. For example, they have convincingly argued that myth and dream have an essentially similar structure. According to psychoanalysis, a myth is a controlled projection of the unconscious which is then reworked by the conscious mind to suit the demands of the culture. They have also drawn attention to the rather obvious fact that both myth and dream share a common language of symbols. Indian religious experiences are often articulated in terms of myths which are replete with traditional symbols ranging from transparent ambiguity to utter incomprehensibility. The latent psychological content of Hindu myths was recognized by the historian Zimmer as early as 1946 when he observed that these mythic tales are meant to stir and feed the unconscious. Despite that, historians have been rather slow in assimilating the fruits of psychoanalytic insight into their research. R. S. Sharma in his Presidential Address to the Indian History Congress in 1975 expressed his satisfaction at the fact that the prospects of applying psychoanalytical approach to early Indian history do not seem to be bright. It is largely through the psychoanalysts therefore, who dip into the rich inventory of Indian mythological lore every now and then in search of clues for Indian identity formation, that the inscrutable resistance of the historian of Indian religions to psychoanalysis is gradually breaking down in very recent years.

Sudhir Kakar (1978), in an effort to explore the developmental significance of Hindu infancy and childhood, examines the themes of shared psychological experiences which govern Indian childhood and the emergence of these themes out of the interplay between a universal process of human development and the Indian cultural milieu. This cultural milieu, according to Kakar, is best reflected in what he calls the symbolic products of society—the age-old myths codified in the religious texts and their more popularized flexible versions in legends and folk-tales. Kakar argues that the adult identity of a culturally devalued Hindu woman begins to be established with her pregnancy, because she then commands a solicitous respect from the society which is rooted in the religious and historical tradition of India equating woman with mother. Thus the child imparts identity to the mother and in return receives deference and indulgence from her, manifested in and symbolized by prolonged physical closeness between the two. As a result an Indian child rarely expresses or experiences an active dislike, fear or contempt for the mother. At an unconscious level, however, Kakar points out, the balance of nurturing may be so affected that the mother may demand that the child serve as an object of her own unfulfilled desires. The child feels confused, helpless and inadequate, frightened by the mother's overwhelming nearness from which the young boy is unable to get away.

This displacement of a woman's sexual longings from her husband to her son—because the fate of an Indian girl's sexuality is a socially enforced progressive renunciation—is, psychologically, one of the most difficult problems for a boy to handle. According to Kakar, therefore, in his fantasy, her presence thus acquires the ominous visage of a bad mother. This general observation Kakar proceeds to illustrate with the help of the Putanā story in the Kṛṣṇa corpus of myths contained in the *Purāṇas*. Kaṁsa instructed the demoness Putanā to kill the infant Kṛṣṇa. Transformed into a beautiful woman, with a deadly poison smeared on her nipples, Putanā came to the house where Kṛṣṇa lived. Pretending an upsurge of maternal love she took Kṛṣṇa from his foster mother and gave him her poisoned breast to suckle. Kṛṣṇa sucked so hard that he also sucked her life away. Kakar suggests that the

Putanā myth underplays the sexually threatening aspect of the bad mother. The secret fantasy of poisoned milk of nourishment that kills, originates early in life when the decisive separation between child and mother takes place.

The elevation of this fantasy to the status of myth for a whole culture indicates the intensity of inner conflict associated with the separation in the Indian setting. Putanā's poisoned breast symbolizes the Indian boy's critical psychosocial dilemma : how to enjoy his mother's love and support without crippling his own budding individuality. Krṣṇa's destruction of Putanā represents one solution of the son's conflict. By killing the bad mother in fantasy, the son obliterates the overweening and sexually ravenous maternal image in his psyche and leaves the benign, protective one intact. Thus, in the Putanā myth, this emptying of the bad mother of her life-giving sensuality and sexual vitality, as well as the necessary establishment of boundaries between her and her son, is condensed into a single pungent image. Kakar extends his argument a little further to suggest that the Krṣṇa myths, by presenting modal psychic conflicts and their fantasised resolutions in a socially congenial form, highlight the main themes in Indian inner life. Kakar also explains the popularity of Krṣṇa cult in terms of its promise to release the repressed instincts by inviting the devotee to identify with Krṣṇa who symbolizes an ideal primal self, free from all social and superego constraints.

J. Moussaief Masson, (1980), a Sanskritist and psychoanalyst, is more specifically concerned with the origins of religious sentiment in ancient India. Masson contends that there is a profound masochistic tendency in all of us to detach ourselves from other people, and then to exalt that detachment into a philosophical principle of sublime proportions. The singular interest that Indian literature can have for the psychologically-minded is that this stance was pushed to its ultimate limits in ancient Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Masson observes that a deep and natural need to express human feelings were, by the dictates of Indian culture, rigorously suppressed. As a result they seemed unable to recognize and acknowledge them. Masson therefore declares that this retreat from the emotions, this dread fear of human feeling, is one of the

fundamental disguised themes of almost all ancient Indian writing and stands in need of both exploration and explanation. If this escape from the emotions is a genuine symptom, that is, if it represents an attempt to satisfy two conflicting desires, we can expect to find in the escape, evidence, although in disguised form, of the original impulse which was so strong that it required this panicked flight. The literal flight into the forest, Masson says, provides such evidence. The attraction of this compromise solution is evident in all Indian accounts of the wanderer : here is a man who renounces everything because, the texts tell us, of pain. The sadness of being abandoned, even if it looked as if one were acting by choice rather than being acted upon by forces one could neither understand nor master, became bound in a cultural tradition that sanctioned and rewarded such behaviour. Hence the unbearable sadness became bearable and the rich emotional life was replaced by intellectual and theological goals that could, in appearance, fill an effective void left by the uprooted family life.

Masson illustrates his general assessment of this unusual attitude to life with the example of the life of the Buddha. He says that from all accounts it appears that at some crucial point in his life he must have been severely depressed. He gave a kind of distorted recognition to this fact when he made sorrow and suffering the cornerstone of his ethical teaching. This is projection, the attribution of dimly perceived psychic states of feeling to the outer world, but this is in contradistinction to other religions where supernatural revelations from god serve as the cornerstone of ethical teachings. The Buddha was able to perceive a basic fact of human experience correctly even if he erred in seeking a direction for its provenance. Buddha suffered from melancholia, and any attempt to gain some deeper human understanding of him as a man must come to terms with his depression. It is then possible to recognize that much within Buddhism is a manic defense against depression. Mania need not be tied to its more agitated external manifestations; mania can betray its presence by a calm but unrealistic happiness, an emotional isolation from the only real source of happiness there is, other people, so that the Buddhist insistence on sealing off one's emotional and

sexual responses to other people is a denial. Masson, therefore, suggests that an application of psychoanalytic insight into depression will provide us with a better understanding of the central problematic of the Buddhist way of life.

In a recent comprehensive study of Gaṇeśa, the elephant headed god, Paul B. Courtright (1985) has studied the psychological significance of the Gaṇeśa cycle of myths in the context of family relationships. The following is the summary of the most frequently attested aspects of the Gaṇeśa myths in the major *Purāṇas*. Once when Śiva had left his wife Pārvatī for a long time in order to meditate on Mount Kailāsa, she became lonely and longed to have a son who would give her love and protection. She produced a young man from her bodily waste and breathed life into him. She then placed him at the doorway of her bath, instructing him to admit no one. Meanwhile Śiva returned from his meditations and arrived at Pārvatī's private chamber, but the young man refused to let him in. Not knowing that the guard was Pārvatī's creation Śiva became angry and after a battle cut off the guard's head. When Pārvatī saw what happened she was overcome with grief and told Śiva that unless he restored her son with a new head she would destroy the universe. So Śiva sent his servants in search of a new head. They found an elephant's head and returned to place it on the vacant shoulder of Pārvatī's guardian son. As the son revived Śiva gave him the name Gaṇeśa, made him lord of his own group of devotees, the *gaṇas,* and adopted him as his own son.

Courtright says that it is a tale of family relations and reflects the unconscious ambivalences of early forgotten childhood experience. The story begins even before Gaṇeśa arrives, with the tension between the mother and father over whether to have a child at all. The mother fervently desires a son; the father resists. After Gaṇeśa's arrival, the myth evokes the playful intimacy and warmth between the mother and her newly created son, an intimacy enjoyed while the father remains at a distance. Eventually the mother must let the son go; the son must confront the father and compete with him for access to the mother. The son positions himself between the mother and the father, calling forth the mother's protective instincts. The son submits and sacrifices his own

claims on the mother to gain acceptance from the father on the father's terms. The father, however, does not demand total submission; he wounds rather than kills. In this Indian setting, therefore, an inversion of the Western version of the Oedipal theme occurs and finds a different resolution. The confrontation between father and son for the mother ends with the defeat of the son, followed by his restoration to the proximity of the mother, but not to intimacy with her. From the mother's side, however, the story presents another set of ambivalences inherent in the realities of family life. With his mother the son is bound in a close emotional relationship, yet she must participate in severing this bond as she yields him up to the authority of the male world, symbolized by the constellation of asceticism and initiation into the realm of social life and by Pārvatī's creating and then endangering Gaṇeśa by making him her guardian. She is the generous good mother and the capricious bad mother at the same time who does not wish to protect the child from decapitation. Courtright thus suggests that much of the appeal of Gaṇeśa for the Hindus surely stems from the capacity of his myths to evoke the inevitable ambivalences of family life at their most intense levels and to represent the tensions and resolutions of the developmental process as they occur in the context of traditional Hindu society and values.

These studies clearly show that application of psychoanalysis to ancient Indian religion is still at its exploratory stage and yet they demonstrate its use to the historian. Masson's claim that for ancient India, the "study of the mythology replaces the direct study of the individual idiosyncrasies of a single life" (1980) may be an exaggeration, but it effectively underscores the basic assumption that psychoanalysis does illumine meaning of mythological symbols which are multivalent by their very obscurity. More particularly, if ancient mythology gives us direct access to the defense mechanisms prevalent in any culture, a psychoanalytic understanding of them should provide us with reasons of relative social acceptability of various deities with whom myths are very often attached. Unfortunately the few studies of psychoanalytic orientation on Indian religion that exist are mostly written by professional psychoanalysts. Hence they are understandably

deficient in meeting the demands that the discipline of history makes on its practitioners. For example, *traditional Hindu society* is hardly a historical category, even though it is used to trace the dominant themes in the culture. As a result, Kakar's generalizations often tend to be impressionistic. Similarly Masson's characterization of Indian religious values as essentially ascetic is open to question. Possibly no other institutional religion in the world has such an unrestrained celebration of the sensual as Hinduism.

When a historian does use psychoanalysis, he is still undecided, almost apologetic about it: "One need not be an ideological Freudian to see the fruitfulness of raising psychoanalytic questions about a myth" (Courtright, 103). But the ice has been broken and a team effort between psychoanalyst and historian is in sight. That is why one should be particularly careful in recognizing the limits of the explanatory power of psychoanalysis. For instance, psychoanalysis has not satisfactorily demonstrated the actual process whereby projective systems (mental processes which get projected on to objective realities) are created. Thus while we know Hindu men's childhood experience of a bad mother insures images of the fierce goddess, we still do not know why it took a public form. In other words, why are only some psychical conflicts projected onto a cultural form and not others. Besides, while the psychoanalytic account connects social structure to religious images, it does not explain the existence of a particular social structure. But then psychoanalysis never claims to be an omnipotent system of explanation with an answer to all possible questions. Indeed, this is an area where a historian ought to step in.

A social anthropological approach to religion involves detailed analysis of a limited social field, in which the role of religion is studied with emphasis on customs, rites and beliefs, in social relations. According to the anthropological understanding of religion, it is an aspect of a cultural system. Like all elements of cultural systems, religious symbols also belong to society and not to individual members of that society. In other words, religious symbols are part of the common understanding of a given society. However, religious systems are a model of reality – they chart the physical

relationships in a way that makes the world comprehensible to men. In addition, they are models for reality – they organize physical relationships. That is, religious systems not only make sense of the world by constructing a model of its functioning, they also provide guidelines for the way the world will function, particularly by providing guidelines for men's actions within the world.

As a result many of such studies are concerned not with the explanation of society, that is, the explanatory task here is to discover the contributions which religion, taken as the independent variable, makes to societal integration, by its satisfaction of sociological wants. I have chosen three examples of such studies on India as representatives of three areas of interest within this broad framework : the structure of the verbalized beliefs of the practitioners of rural Hindu religious behaviour, the rationale of divine hierarchy in the Hindu pantheon and festivals associated with the worship of 'Great Tradition' deities as principles of social organization.

Susan Wadley (1975) studies the god-man relationship in her analysis of power in Hindu ideology and practice in the Karimpur village of western Uttar Pradesh. Wadley contends that according to the inhabitants of Karimpur, the basic characteristic of any god, demon or ghost is the powers which he/she controls and represents—the fact that he/she is in essence, power. Those beings filled with power are the supernatural beings; they make up the village pantheon. Here power does not mean just its most widely known connotation—female power or śaktī, but power in general. Every being in the universe embodies its share of power, a share originating from a single, all-powerful, undifferentiated substance. However, some beings have more power than others; they are the supernatural beings—the gods of Karimpur. Wadley explains the presence of equivalence in the god-man relationship through her study of the vrat-kathā ritual which reveal worship-belief transaction between people and gods. She begins with a detailed description of the role of the kathā in the ritual activity of Karimpur and attempts to justify an analysis of the kathā that treats them as a class with a common structure, rather than as individual myths. She then goes on to provide an analysis of the persistent and recurring

internal structure of *kathā* as a category of myths. Following a Lévi-Straussian method of analysis, Wadley arrives at the following main structural oppositions and resolutions in the *kathā*: happiness-disrespect/wrong act-anger/revenge-sorrow-faith/service-mercy/boons-happiness. Her analysis of the *kathā* helps answer the question, 'why worship?' These myths, used as an exegesis of the *vrat* cycle, proclaim people's dependence on god and the necessity of periodic ritual activity in order to prevent disaster in this life, to obtain their mind's desires, and to add to their merit for the next life. The *kathā* provides meaning for the ritual transactions between people and the gods by underlining the transactions between them—the exchanges of devotion for mercy, service for boons. The ability of the gods to provide boons asserts their superiority over people. Their ability to punish people who have acted wrongly reaffirms this superiority and also provides incentives for right action.

Lawrence A. Babb (1975) has studied popular religion in Chattisgarh, an area of eastern Madhya Pradesh, in an effort to understand popular Hinduism as a system of concepts and practices in a pattern and consistency of its own. Babb is concerned with the systemic aspects of religion where he argues for a continuity between the salvationary aspects of philosophical Hinduism and the pragmatic and magical elements of popular religion. Babb says that the Hindu pantheon is a fluid array of supernatural beings and tends to alter in form as one context is replaced by another. In some contexts particular deities, primarily goddesses in Chattisgarh, are seen as discrete entities, but under other circumstances, such as at the most abstract level, deities merge with one another and their characteristics blend. It is thus possible to say that the goddess, in the abstract sense, is both married and unmarried. That she is married follows from the premise that all goddesses are one and the fact that in some of her manifestations she is quite explicitly married. The goddess as Pārvatī or Sītā appears in popular iconography in a matrimonial context, standing beside and subordinate to her husband. While Lakṣmī usually appears alone, she is explicitly understood to be Viṣṇu's wife. But goddesses as Durgā, Mahāmāyā or Kālī—the fierce goddesses—never appear in a matrimonial

context, but rather alone. Further the goddess in these forms is identified directly with the parochial goddesses of Chattisgarh, who are never thought of as married. It is in these unmarried manifestations that the goddess may receive blood sacrifice.

As the consort of any of the gods, the goddess seems to undergo a kind of transformation into what is almost the antithesis of the fierce goddess. As Pārvatī, Lakṣmī or Sītā she becomes a benevolent goddess, a giver of wealth and progeny, and is never offered blood sacrifice. Involved in the transformation from the sinister to the domesticated goddess is an intriguing reversal of the male-female pairing. This according to Babb, provides the key to an understanding of the dual nature of the Hindu divinity. In one pairing of god and goddess, where they appear unambiguously as husband and wife, the god is represented as dominant and the goddess as dutifully subordinate. Deities of this kind seem to embody certain key values of Indian civilization. It is as if the imposition of a basic vehicle of social order—marriage—on the relationship between god and goddess creates the possibility for the elaboration of divine attributes in accordance with basic order-producing values—hence the great variety in this sector of the pantheon. This elaboration seems to dissolve away in the opposite pairing, where the goddess is ascendant. If the god appears at all, it is not in the role of husband but of henchman and servant. The goddess in this form is not conceived primarily as an exemplar of values and principles, but the embodiment of an impersonal force—one that can be used, but that may be dangerous to the user. There is an explicit identification of the goddess in this form with certain agencies of misfortune, such as disease, particularly in the local context.

At the same time opposition between male and female is an important integrating principle in the pantheon. It appears in both textual and local complexes and in so doing unites the two. The symbolism of the pantheon provides for disruptive and harmful forces and allows them a zone of ascendancy. It thus accounts for aspects of the human experience that, however they may be regretted, can never be denied. At the same time it ultimately contains these forces,

and by doing so seems to say that although they may have a degree of free play in man's most immediate situation, in a wider context, that represented by textual deities, they are transcended by basic values of society. In other words, Babb suggests, that the pantheon manipulates its symbolic apparatus in such a way that malevolent aspects of divine power are encompassed within a wider order. Babb thinks that herein lies the answer to the questions : Why is it a hierarchy? Why are the identities of the local deities not fully absorbed by the superior deities whose worship carries more prestige? The role of symbolism of the pantheon overrides or transcends a basic contradiction in Chattisgarh life : the necessity for order and the fact of immanent disorder, the necessity for safety and the fact of pervasive hazard. The pantheon mutes the contradiction by drawing an equivalence between ultimate safety and immediate danger; they are simply different aspects of the same thing. In this, Babb's formulation confirms Wadley's explanation of the nature of the rural Hindu pantheon in its essential characteristics and also the motivation behind the worship.

Akös Östör (1960) has as his subject of study the festivals in connection with the annual worship of Durgā and Śiva in a small township called Vishnupur in central West Bengal, which is patronized by a local dynasty of kings who still enjoy a certain privileged position in that area. Östör suggests that festivals unify as well as divide the town, according to the deities involved. The three major divinities—Durgā, Śiva and Viṣṇu—are included in each other's festivities; yet the divisions of the town alter according to the cyclical return of the ritual of worship in the annual calendar. The annual worship of the three major deities defines the town as a single unit, a totality of men and women, objects, and living things in opposition to the divinity. In these rituals of worship the whole town participates and all share the benefits of the ritual. Alternatively, the town is organized both socially and spatially in such a way that major public rituals can be mounted by and for the people as a whole, or by any segment of the town as a whole. Every act of worship rests on a structure of tripartite relations—deity, ritualist, worshipper. The mythology of the festivals elaborates the relationship of the deities to the

town.

The Goddess Durgā is the divinity of the town; she herself instructed one of the early kings to find a settlement and establish her worship in the place where she manifested herself to him. Townsmen regard the annual worship of Durgā as the worship of the goddess of Vishnupur, which is performed on behalf of the king and the people. Similarly, particular manifestations of Śiva and Viṣṇu are also associated with the town in the mythology, both as saviours and as benefactors. The annual festivals of these deities are also the acts of worship of king and people. The relation between king and divinity is a significant one; through a king or kinglike figure the people of the locality come into contact with the gods. The king is the enjoyer of the land and the ruler of the subjects; the goddess is also a royal personage. Most deities, their images and their initial appearance in the town, are connected with the king in this way. The king may 'give' worship to his subject, and in this whole complex of worship the townsmen stand in the same relation to the god as does the king himself. The third category is the office of the sacrificer or the priest and it completes the structure of the worship, which underlies the system of relations within all festivals. Worship is offered on someone's behalf, but there is an intermediary between the offerer and the deity, the brahmin who has to offer the royal sacrifice on the king's behalf. The offices of the priests and the offerer are distinguished not only in the ideology but in the internal order of the worship. This model of the goddess, king and priest function as the basic set of relational categories. In many ways royalty is no longer important in the town; yet it has an enduring significance that has allowed the emergence of a new category within this system of relationships. The rituals of Durgā and Śiva express the unity of the town as society and locality.

The rituals in the worship of other deities act the same way. There are three main Kṛṣṇa temples in the town, which divide a single unit into three parts under different manifestations of the same deity. These major units are made up of neighbourhoods that cluster into markets. Several markets make up the main divisions of the town. All these units are

significant when viewed through worship and festivals. Each of them combines locality and people in opposition to a deity. Each is a whole in the symbolic action of worship and in the crucial role of the offerer. The collectivity of men in a particular locality is the offerer in community worships. The community is to the goddess as the king is to the goddess, the king ranking above the community because of his alliance with the goddess. But today she is related to the locality and to the people in the same manner. There is no reason to doubt that one day the king's worship too will be mounted by the community as a whole, thus letting the process complete a full circle and bring back the worship at the royal temple to the most encompassing position on the level of relationships as well as on the levels of action and ideology. The king's is the fundamental model, however, for only he could bring the high and the low castes together in the festivals. Today many community worships still have a ritual performed in the name of the king, since there is no other way of performing a truly community worship in which all the people of a locality offer worship together. It is the relation of the king to the goddess and to the priest that is replicated in the relations of community, caste, neighbourhood, line and household head to the other two categories. In this scheme the roles and offices are distinct and the categories clearly defined, but they are replaceable in a hierarchical segmentary system. A hierarchy within the town is formed by the kingdom, the town, a collectivity, the threefold division, a locality, a caste, a line, and a household paralleling a hierarchy of deities, manifestation of the goddess, festivals of other deities, which in turn are parallel to elements of space, the major temples of the town, the locality, shrines and household, line and individual temples and altars.

These three studies display three distinct but interrelated attitudes with regard to one of the central concerns of the historian of religions—the texts. It has been customary, even for those historians who study religion in its regional manifestation and are sensitive to the need to combine insights derived from actual performances and scriptural injunctions, to oppose, separate and realign religion and society, great tradition and little tradition, text and context, Sanskritic or

brahmanic and local-level Hinduism. The oppositions hinge
upon the crucial centrality of the sacred texts. Where rituals
are discussed at all, they are secondary to considerations of
the Sanskritic versus the local calendar, Purāṇic or other
blueprints of performance, the enactment of myths as referable
to some tradition or another. These oppositions do not refer
to living reality: they put together performance with a
blueprint the investigator knows to be true independently and
a priori. These are of course limitations inherent in the
historian's craft, as indeed the anthropologist is primarily
preoccupied with the operational aspects of religion. Wadley,
however, considers textual analysis as the justifiable domain of
an anthropologist, and therefore her aim is to bring together
the textual approach of the historian-theologian with the
contextual one of the anthropologist, using what she calls
"standard" local-level texts as her primary data. Wadley
ignores the question whether these texts derive their validity
from the great Sanskritic textual material or not. Wadley's
achievement is unique in that she applies the method of a
historian to arrive at an anthropological understanding of the
religious processes.

Babb, on the other hand, has *Devī Māhātmya* as his constant
point of reference in his quest to establish a continuum
between the textual deities and the deities of "experience." His
field of observations bring him in incongruous juxtaposition to
the textual material and yet he discovers connections that
draw diverse elements into a coherent whole. His method is
anthropological but his assumptions are that of a historian.

Östör posits a separate and autonomous significance for the
analysis of texts, if only to establish a heuristic difference
between anthropology, on the one hand, and history, theology
and such other disciplines, on the other. The meaning
discovered in textual studies cannot be assumed to be the
same as those in the rites he has discussed. These meanings
are not opposed, however, in the sense of two orders or levels
of reality communicating with each other. The texts are
encapsulated within the festivals. The *Purāṇas*, the celebrations
together form a totality. To select a level of textual data within
this totality would be equivalent to separating out the
behavioural elements for independent analysis. The meaning of

a text in relation to others in a textual study will of necessity be different from the meaning of the same text in the study of festivals. The difference is provided by the historical and social-anthropological appreciation of man: man in its ideal representation and man in the context of action in the world.

Ritual, which may be described as patterned behaviour, often communal, consisting of prescribed actions performed periodically and/or repetitively, is perhaps the most important of the constituent elements of religion. It is at the centre of any religious performance and is thus directly observable. It should therefore be one of the major concerns of the historian of religion. At the same time, however, ritual invokes causes of a historically unverifiable kind and it seems to seek practical ends by non-empirical means or to have no practical purpose at all. This makes ritual a particularly difficult subject to interpret from a historical point of view. Whatever be the reason, not much work has been done on ancient Indian ritual and despite abundance of material and the availability of P. V. Kane's handy compendium, the field of studies in Purāṇic ritual is practically barren. Scholars however, still feel attracted to Vedic rituals, and the trend of current research on the subject reflects preoccupation with both the systematization of the enormous corpus of Vedic sacrifices as well as analysis of specific rites.

The *Vedas* are, as Louis Renou had put it, first and foremost a liturgy and only secondarily a mythological and speculative system. The supreme importance attached to elaborate ritual performance in the Vedic period incontrovertibly suggests that sacrifice was the basic feature of Vedic religion. In the earliest Vedic literature itself, rituals along with metres and chants, are depicted as instruments used by gods and demons to fight and conquer each other, and sometimes to create. It is obvious, however, that the priests who performed rites on behalf of *yajamāna* cannot always be thought of as conquering or creating. Moreover, the later commentaries, especially the *Brāhmaṇas* attached to the various Vedic schools, provide rituals with a great variety of interpretations, sometimes inconsistent with each other, many of which are obvious rationalizations. Some invoke events, myths or legends that have nothing to do with the rites at

hand. On the other hand, the most important episodes of Vedic mythology, those that reflect cosmogonic events, are not used in any rites.

All these elaborations and obfuscations render the interpreter's task particularly intractable. However, there is one aspect of Vedic rituals which is easily amenable to historical understanding, at least on the surface level—the purpose of the rites. The recitations that accompany the rites often express specific desires—wealth, strength, sons, victory, heaven, immortality. These are not exclusively spiritual nor wholly materialistic. Jan Gonda (1980), in his voluminous study of the complete ritual schemata and paradigms of the Vedic non-solemn rites, devotes a long chapter to the subject. Gonda says that only in a small number of cases are the purpose of a rite not completely clear. Normally it is in the texts, indicated either by the name of the rite or by *mantras* prescribed. Sometimes however, the author explicitly comments upon the purpose or significance of the rite under discussion. A definite ritual precept may be given for more than one reason. Texts not infrequently disagree about the purpose of a direction, but rarely to such an extent that their explanations are mutually exclusive. In studying the problem of what was, in the eyes of the Vedic man, the significance of his ritual effort, one should not overlook the fact that, irrespective of what may have been the specific, well defined, immediate or deferred results of a rite, the correct observance of social, ritual, religious rules, customs and duties led to the acquisition or even accumulation of merit. Saluting one's superiors and paying reverence to the aged are not only matters of etiquette, they are also conducive to an increase in knowledge, length of life, fame and strength.

On the other hand, planets will certainly lead the man and woman who is unclean, does not recite the sacred texts, and forsakes the auspicious ceremonies to death. The belief obtained that the ritual merits of a person awaited him in the so called world of meritorious work, that is, the sphere or condition of those who have earned the rewards of well-performed rites, a celestial state gained and achieved by a person's ritual and religious merits. That is to say the good consequences of the correct performance of the socio-religious

duties incumbent upon a twice-born person are accumulated to await him in a special world, accompanying him even in the beyond. The sacrificer is supposed to follow the sacrificial gifts to the world of the gods, the merit accruing from them awaiting him. In short, according to Gonda, ritual activity is believed to produce not only concrete effects in the phenomenal world—succinctly enumerated in *Jaiminīya Gṛhyasūtra*, but also unseen spiritual merit. The term 'unseen' is used to denote the invisible merit attaching to man's conduct and the corresponding reward in the hereafter. Bathing has a visible effect, the removal of dirt and an invisible one, the ritual purification of the body; if however, one bathes in a ritually incorrect way one may effect the cleansing but not secure the spiritual result of a bath.

Frits Staal (1983), in his detailed introduction to the massive two volume study of the Vedic sacrifice *agnicayana* from every conceivable angle, has approached the question of performance of Vedic rites and resulting benefits from another point of view. Staal's attitude is encapsulated in his use of the term 'orthopraxy' by which he means right action. Staal believes that for a Hindu what he does is more important than what he thinks or says. Hence Vedic sacrifices are a good example of orthopraxy for they primarily relate to physical action. Staal argues that by the time the Vedic rituals had reached their greatest elaboration, the reiterated wishes for material and spiritual gain receded into the background. Their place was taken by a codification of the two kinds of rites: The *gṛhya* rites and the *śrauta* rites. While the *gṛhya* rites are performed with the domestic fire by the domestic priest, the *śrauta* rights are more elaborate.

The function of the domestic rites are fairly straight forward—fulfilment of desires, while the significance of the *śrauta* rite is not obvious. The *śrauta* ritual, with its myriad ramifications, exhibits the unhampered development of ritual construction and creativity. It is therefore more important for the understanding of ritual than the domestic rites. There are moreover *śrauta* rituals that last a thousand years, which shows that some of the rites were purely theoretical. Such theoretical constructs should not be brushed aside, as some scholars of the earlier generation were disposed to do, notably

Hillebrandt. On the contrary, Staal insists, they are as important for the theory of ritual as are concrete ceremonies. According to *śrauta sūtra* a ritual comprise three elements: *dravya*—the substance used in oblation, *devatā*—the deity to which oblation is offered and *tyāga*—renunciation of the fruits of the ritual act. At this point a contradiction begins to appear, which becomes increasingly explicit in the ritualistic philosophy of the *Mīmāṁsā*. The reason for performing a specific ritual is stated to be desire for a particular fruit. But this fruit is renounced whenever the *yajamāna* utters his *tyāga* formula of renunciation. The effect, therefore, is not obtained. The resulting picture is further complicated by another apparent contradiction. The rites are subdivided into two classes: *nitya* or obligatory and *kāmya* or optional. Unlike the *agnicayana* which is optional, the *agniṣṭoma* is an obligatory rite; every brahmin has a duty to perform it. So here is a ritual that appears to be optional, since it is confined to those who desire heaven, but that is also not optional because it is a prescribed duty, and that does not bear any fruit, for its fruits are ultimately abandoned.

The *Mīmāṁsā* philosophers faced another difficulty. When a ritual performance is completed, no fruit is seen. The *yajamāna* does not rise up and go to heaven. Rather he returns home as he was before. In particular, he must continue to perform the morning and evening five rites—*agnihotra*—for the rest of his life. The *Mīmāṁsā* concluded that the fruit of ritual activity is temporarily unseen. It will become apparent only after death. An elaborate theory was devised to show that this is in accordance with the mechanism of *karman*. A special logical theorem called *arthapatti* was invented in support of this theory. Staal, therefore, argues that what the *Mīmāṁsā* thus ended up teaching is that the rituals have to be performed for their own sake.

J. C. Heesterman (1985) also arrives at contradiction as the key to an understanding of Vedic ritualism in his study of the correspondence between sacrifice and transcendence. Heesterman states that the purpose of sacrifice is clear: it mediates between the human and the transcendent world. The communication between this and the yonder world by way of sacrifice always remains a problem that defies attempts at a

definitive solution. Since sacrifice is also concerned with offerings, it is tempting to explain sacrifice in the same way as gifts. The idea is not totally wrong, for it is a matter of no mean import for man to inveigle the transcendent powers, whose impact he cannot avoid, into a manipulable equilibrium of gift and reciprocity. But the transcendent does not submit to any system but its own. It only knows its own absolute order and as such is a deeply disturbing power that even threatens to overthrow all humanly conceivable order. Sacrifice, therefore, is an awesome and terrifying venture. It goes far beyond the bounds of gift and reciprocity, of solidarity and participation.

Yet on the Vedic conception of sacrifice, the sacrificial order is viewed as the rigidly stable order of the universe established by the gods as the world's first institution. For all the mechanistic security of the classical conception of sacrifice, however, the original danger still shines through. The sacrifice is an all-or-nothing enterprise; it either ends in triumphantly enriched life or in loss and death. But the essential ambivalence of sacrifice goes still further, for even death and failure can still turn into a sign of ultimate triumph. It is evident from the legend of Sthūra who, while performing a sacrifice, was defeated, plundered and killed by a hostile band. Although he is dead, the survivors have a vision that he is passing from the place of sacrifice into heaven. It would seem that here death and destruction breaking out of the ritual structure are not so much a fatal disturbance as they are the essence of sacrifice itself. The attackers and the attacked are both consecrated and are engaged in the same sacrificial action.

In the epic, sacrifice is a fatal doom and in fact has already been overcome—it belongs to the preceding era, *dvāpara*. The intellectualized and systematized Vedic ritual has now been set apart in lonely eminence as the *śrūti*. As such it has no common ground with the world in the same way that *dharma* has to invoke the ultimate authority of the *śrūti* with which it has no real connection anymore. Vedic ritual, as transcendent injunction, can only be devoted to the maintenance of a static, unchanging order of the universe. It should keep up a constant, interrupted circulation between men and gods, earth

and heaven. But within this order there is no room anymore for the unpredictable working of the transcendent. Vedic ritual, then, can neither offer a viable model for a person's life and activity in the world nor do justice to the transcendent. It can only propose an absolute order. How then should the orthodox Hindu relate to the transcendent when the Vedic sacrifice fails him? In answer to this question Heesterman proposes to have a close look at *agnihotra* which he believes, provides the basic paradigm of Vedic sacrifice in its simplest form: on the one hand the cult of the fire involving the sacrifice of a little bit of food or drink, on the other the meal or the solemn banquet.

This magical operation was meant to support and maintain the sun on its regular daily course, but the essential point of the ritual was neutralization or desacralization of food so as to make it free for consumption. The need for food forces man to enter into violent contact with the sacred and to expose himself to the ominous consequences of his transgression. He can only neutralize these risks by giving up again what he has gained by his transgression by abandoning a token part of the food by pouring it in the fire. Without the fire offering he would himself fall prey to death because of the violation and killing he had to perpetrate to obtain his food. This numinous and threatening background forms a striking contrast to the total harmlessness of the *agnihotra*. The exclusive emphasis is on mechanistic certainty.

The elimination of death and catastrophe from the ritual, Heesterman suggests, was not a gradual and cumulative process of erosion but a conscious reform. Its aim was to control the perils of the quest for transcendence. This comes out clearly in the mythical story of the sacrificial contest between the Lord of Life, Prajāpati, and his opponent Death—a story that may be considered the 'charter myth' of Vedic ritualism. The decisive point is Prajāpati's seeing the equivalence of the elements of his sacrifice with those of his opponent's sacrifice. Prajāpati is thereby enabled to integrate the rival sacrifice and to eliminate conflict and overcome death. Identification based on equivalences of cosmic and ritual elements enabled the ritualists to construe a closed mechanistic universe, controlled and directed by the ritual.

Uncertainty was replaced by the failsafe certainty of ritualism. But the price of excluding uncertainty was internal contradiction.

The *agnihotra* ideally illustrates this process. The *kṣatriya*, the king and as upholder of *dharma* the ideal sacrificer, is excluded from the *agnihotra*, for he perpetrates many impure acts. An attempt has been made to solve the problem in the following way: the exclusion of the *kṣatriya* is waived if he has shown his ritual devotion by performing the Soma sacrifice. According to Heesterman, this appears to hold the key to the origin of the contradiction. Sometime before the actual Soma sacrifice, the sacrificer undergoes the consecration. The consecrated then starts on a begging tour that should help him to collect the necessities for the sacrifice. Although this tour is a perfectly harmless rite, its original character is easily recognizable. The consecrated sets out as warrior on a racing chariot. Clearly, the original purpose of this pomp and circumstance is to obtain the goods for sacrifice at the sacrificial contests organized by others. It is this keenness on prize and plunder that marks the consecrated—like the *kṣatriya*, as impure. It is only afterwards when his warrior prowess has won him the property—especially cattle—needed for sacrifice, that he can set himself up as a liberal host and sacrificer. Originally then, there was a cycle of two opposite phases—the consecrated warrior and the munificent sacrificer, the pivot of this vicious circle being the sacrificial contest with its uncertain outcome. This cyclical course of sacrifice can be genetically connected with the mechanistically conceived circulation between heaven and earth propounded by ritualistic theory. But the ritual is of an entirely different nature. It removed the catastrophic turning point and thereby exclude the transcendent. The old cycle deprived of its dynamic centre collapsed. Catastrophe was replaced by contradicton.

The ultimate breakdown of ritualism is, however, not the last word. This is once again illustrated by the last manifestation of *agnihotra-prāṇāgnihotra* or sacrifice in the internal fires of the breaths. In plain fact, it is a meal surrounded by some simple ritual acts and *mantras*. The special importance of the *prāṇāgnihotra* is the fusion and concentration of both meal and

sacrifice in the single person of the sacrificer. It emancipates the sacrificer from society. The utter reduction of sacrifice in the *praṇāgnihotra* is the end station of Vedic ritualism. All opposition—consecrated and sacrificer, giver and recipient, world and transcendence—has been drawn together and fused in the single sacrificer. The important point is that out of the awesome violence of sacrifice a new and unique view of the transcendent has been won. It urges man to emancipate himself from his mundane bonds and to realize the transcendent exclusively by himself and in himself through the knowledge of the self. Heesterman concludes, the ritual of sacrifice, therefore, cannot be the pivotal moment in Indian thought, for it has been overcome and superseded by knowledge.

Charles Malamoud (1988) addresses himself to the symbolic mechanism of establishing correspondence between sacrifice and transcendence, in his essay on the actual procedure of carving up the victim in Vedic sacrifice. Malamoud's assumption is that identification based on equivalences of cosmic and ritual elements is the premier intellectual tool of the Vedic 'science' of ritual. Malamoud draws our attention to the contrast between the wealth and detail of the strictly technical instructions on the procedure and circumstances of the operation of cutting a sacrificial victim into pieces and the poverty and slightness of speculative commentary on the correspondence between each portion and its consumer. Malamoud says that the reason for such unaccustomed restraint is that the authors of the Vedic treatises on sacrifice appear overridingly preoccupied with how best to proceed so that the parts resulting from the division of the body reconstitute themselves so as to form a living whole. It is this recomposition much more than the fate of each fragment, that is addressed in the hermeneutics and apologetics of the *Brāhmaṇa*. In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* what is counted is not the number of pieces, but the number of offerings that have the dismembered body of the victim as their subject matter. These consist of three series of eleven, amounting to thirty-three in all. The reason given is not that there are thirty-three gods in the Vedic pantheon, but because that is the figure peculiar to man who is the highest in the animal order (he has ten

fingers, toes, and secondary vital breath plus three principle vital breaths). The body is therefore divided up in a way that shows homology with the living man.

This is one example among many of the identification between sacrificer and victim, or more precisely, it is an instance of the animal victim being represented as a substitute for the sacrificer. The sacrificer offers himself up to the divinities when he submits to consecration; when he offers up a victim to the divinities, he buys himself back from the divinities. The sacrificer seeks to show that he is at once identical to and different from the victim. Victim and sacrificer are united, by esoteric identification. Another ans-wer to the question how many portions? is furnished by *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* where the figure is thirty-six. It so happens that the Vedic verse *bṛhati* is made up of thirty-six feet. Also, the celestial worlds are of the same nature as the *bṛhati* : division of the body into thirty-six portions is a reference to the celestial worlds. Dividing the body in this way makes the victim into a celestial being. The number of portions resulting from the division is exactly the same as the number defining a Vedic metre, that is, it is given, or is an articulated whole, whose unity is pre-posited and made up of elements that are at once discontinuous and coherent. The victim can be an offering because the divider's knife makes it into a poem analogue. Thus when a victim is divided into thirty-three or thirty-six pieces, what is being considered is not the plurality involved, but the unitary wholes that such numbers call to mind as the human body, the *bṛhati* verse.

Malamoud provides a further example of the royal sacrifice of the *asvamedha*. The preparatory work of cutting the horse into pieces is carried out by the king's wives. They trace out the paths of the knife with gold, silver and copper needles on the horse's body. The many needles symbolize the multitude of men, and since the horse itself symbolizes the kingdom, the needles securely fixed in its body are the sign that the mass of subjects and the power of the king are well suited to one another. In addition, the needles stand for the points of the compass and the zenith. On the symbolic level thus the needles trace out a bridge or passage that will enable the sacrificer to reach the celestial world. In all these examples,

the divided body of the victim is indirectly reunified either by making it into an analogue of another body—a man or a verse,—or else the dividing lines are transformed metaphorically into lines of linkage between sacrificer and heaven.

It is in the very being of the sacrificial animal that the fragmentation resulting from its death is erased. The victim has scarcely been sacrificed when the sacrificer's wife busies herself round it pouring water on the orifices of the body and on the legs. It is via the orifices that the vital breaths circulate and water is equivalent to vital breaths. Life is restored to the animal by reintroduction of vital breaths. Legs are sprinkled because on it the living animal stands upright. It is the business of the wife because from females creatures are born. The animal is reborn from the woman, its resurrection is a new birth. Then a little gold is put on each piece of the divided parts. Gold is immortality; contact with gold makes the animal immortal. In addition the omentum is sprinkled with melted butter of two different colours, a duality reflecting the breaths of inspiration and expiration. Finally the victim must have its mind returned to it. For this purpose the verse known as *manotā* is recited. In the actual tracing out of the division the purpose is to give an image of quadruped gait. It is life in its movement and continuity that is being restored at the very moment it is rendered asunder.

Malamoud concludes that sacrifice, a structure in which act, agents and substances combine and interlock in a device, is assimilated in these texts to a living organism. Carrying out a sacrifice means unfolding it; it means giving sacrifice its full extension by preserving its continuity. But at the same time it means killing it : not only because the life of a sacrifice has become merged with that of the animal victim, but also because the series of partial acts, and the fragmentation of the sacrificial corpus in time and space, amount to the execution of sacrifice as a simultaneous unity.

Gonda's study of Vedic rituals amply demonstrates that a great many writings on Vedic religion continue to be influenced by the approach of Max Müller. R. N. Dandekar's *Vedic Mythological Tracts* (1979) is another notable example among recent studies that broadly belong to this framework. Linguistics and comparative religion are Gonda's primary tools

of analysis. With this Gonda combines exceptional rigour in textual scholarship. At the same time, and partly because of this, Gonda resists generalization. He himself admits that he has endeavoured to avoid comprehensive theories (p. vii) and largely devoted himself to systematic arrangement of primary data. But whenever Gonda has moved out of this self-imposed limitation, he has shown wonderful insight in observing, for instance, harmony and symbolism of numbers and colours in Vedic rituals. Heesterman and Malamoud's studies, on the other hand, represent attempts at tying up in an interpretative synthesis the amazing variety of bewildering obscurity that the Vedic ritual of sacrifice admits of. The merits of their work are evident in that they foist a recognizable pattern on an apparently incoherent and amorphous mass of material to make them intelligible. But precisely because these studies are so inescapably certain in the logical progression of their argument and fit in so neatly in every detail with their hypothesis that they raise doubts regarding the method of selection of their primary material. Some form of selection is of course inevitable for historical research, but when general principles are evolved to provide an explanation of ritual acts *per se*, on the basis of the study of a handful of such rites, it necessarily renders their conclusions just a little vulnerable.

Besides, there is the question of attributing meaning to a symbol. For example, Malamoud says that questions such as "what is the relationship between parts and wholes" are rarely raised in their own right and formulated as such in the ritual texts, but "the terminology is all there and the way in which the rites are expounded provides the clearest indication that such were their true concerns" (p. 11). In assuming this, however, Malamoud allows himself the liberty of making connections between the 'terminology' and thus decoding symbols without reference to any known system of analysis. The relationship between thirty-six portions of the victim's body and the *bṛhati* verse or between melted butter and breaths of inspiration and expiration are entirely plausible and internally consistent constructs. But since no explanation is offered as to how these correspondences have been worked out except the oblique reference to the availability of the terminology in the texts themselves towards the end of the

essay, which presumably provided the desirable links, they appear highly subjective and therefore somewhat arbitrary. Finally, there is a complete absence of the social context in which these formulations in the realm of thought were operative. Heesterman effectively shows how Vedic sacrifice in the original sense of the term became marginal to the reformulated ritual scheme of the epic period, but he does not explain the necessity or the process of this transition. True, this was not Heesterman's major thrust, but an awareness of the background to this shift would have strengthened his conclusions and would make his essay appear much less an exercise in abstraction. These objections are certainly not meant to take away the remarkable ingenuity of their interpretations, the breadth of their scholarship which informs itself of all the recent sophistication in analysis, and their knowledge of Sanskritic sources. It is only that these new interpretations promise so much that one should stop to have a close look at them. Although the better research on Vedic religion still oscillates between these two poles of scrupulous systematization of data and interpretative synthesis, there are indications that eventually more and more research will move towards the latter.

Myths are traditional narratives in which events are described as deeds of gods, heroes or other superhuman beings, that is, events attributed to causes not acceptable in historical explanation. They are at the same time, a body of popular lore in which the worldview and moral outlook of a group or tradition are embodied. Ancient Indian religious traditions are extraordinarily rich in myths and they have always occupied a central position in religious literature. Myths, because of their involvement with the ritual process, either as explanation or as corollary, are also part of the actual functioning of the religious systems, particularly in Hinduism. Historians have, therefore, always been drawn to the study of mythology, ever since history of religion has been in existence. Just as there are many meanings in a myth, so are there many theories of interpretation. There is the nature interpretation of the nineteenth-century German school, and in reaction to their oversimplification, the school which reduced myths to moralizing comment on the situation of mankind. There is the

metaphysical interpretation of the Hindu theologians and the ritual interpretations of the Hindu priests and certain anthropologists. There is the historical theory that myths are veiled accounts of actual happenings and the allied Marxist view. There is the etiological method which places an emphasis on origins, the psychological interpretations, the comparative mythology, the structuralist method and so on. Of all these what O'Flaherty calls the "text-historical method" is the one which has been most frequently applied to Indian mythology. This is the traditional method which apparently explains a myth by finding its earliest known sources. It is only in the last two decades that a perceptible change of attitude in both the concerns as well as the method of the mythologists towards this precious storehouse of material, is noticeable. I will try and illustrate that with some of the more significant works on the mythology of the Hindu Trinity in recent times.

The Kṛṣṇa cycle of myths is a good example where such a shift in attitude is evident. So far the general trend had been to construct the biography of Kṛṣṇa on the basis of the enormous corpus of myths contained in the epics and the *Purāṇas*. It could either take the form of a chronological life history (Biman Bihari Majumdar, 1969) or a progress of his career from one text to another (Asha Goswami 1984). There has been an attempt to bring together the combined expertise of the historians and anthropologists to bridge the gap between perceptions of "present reality" and scholarship in "ancient knowledge" for a better understanding of the exceedingly complex phenomenon of Kṛṣṇa (Singer ed. 1966). But it remained an exception for a long time. Very recently have historians begun to approach the Kṛṣṇa myths from the thematic point of view, either indentifying a pervasive unity of configuration that runs through the entire gamut, or isolating a segment for an intensive substance analysis of the story type. David R. Kinsley (1974), for instance, looks at the Kṛṣṇa myths to work out the relationship between play and religion in Hindu tradition. The central issue in Kinsley's formulation is the apparent significance of play itself as a positive religious symbol and activity.

The real significance of the similarity, according to him, lies in the fact that in both play and religion man exercises and

is captured by his world-creating, imaginative faculty. Play participates in and expresses 'otherness' (other than the mundane human domain) and otherness is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of religion. An almost universal characteristic of otherness is its transcendence and unconditioned nature. In Hinduism play is typical of the gods and represents an appropriate expression of the unconditioned and transcendent nature of the divine in India. Play, just as much as power, knowledge and eternity, expresses the truth that the gods are not limited. For play expresses freedom; it is carefree and relatively unmotivated; it is intrinsically satisfying rather than instrumental. The gods act, but their acts cannot be understood simply within the structures of theological or ethical systems. In their complex otherness, their actions can only be called *līlā*, meaning sport or play. And *līlā* is different from, or other than, the world of here and now that is dominated by cause and effect, where a human being is forced to act out of necessity. Thus the term *līlā* is almost synonymous with divine activity generally, and with Kṛṣṇa's activity specifically.

In Kṛṣṇa's long history he has been many things to many people : a counsellor, companion, politician, preacher, king, and the Absolute God. But it was as a humble cowherd boy that he was destined to gain his immense popularity and fame. From Kṛṣṇa's long and detailed history, the medieval *bhakti* cults of the north have focussed on Kṛṣṇa's superfluous life as a youth in Vṛndāvana to the almost total exclusion of the rest of his history and biography which is seen as a mere insignificant epilogue. His sojourn in Vṛndāvana has in effect been taken from its biographical context and made into his most complete manifestation. In attempting to understand why the most frivolous and apparently inconsequential chapter of Kṛṣṇa's biography has been fastened upon as the most meaningful by the medieval *bhakti* cults, Kinsley refers to a popular Bengali saying : without Kṛṣṇa there is no song. For of all the Hindu gods Kṛṣṇa expresses most completely all that is beautiful, graceful, and enticing in the other world of the divine. He embodies all those things that are extra in life, but without which life would not be worth living. He does not live in a palace; his heavenly court is held in the bowers of

Vṛndāvana where he sports as an equal with lowly cowherd women or plays with cowherd boys. His entire life in Vṛndāvana practically accomplishes nothing. His essential qualities as a cowherd youth are not those that would lend themselves to an orderly, pious routine in the normal, pragmatic world. His essential qualities are mere adornments. His beauty, humour, artistic talent, and playful spirit are ornamental and meant only for aimless display. And it is precisely these extra qualities that set him apart from the world of the ordinary and express the essence of the divine world of the other. He is the embodiment of all that is implied in the word *līlā* : boistrous revelry, frivolity, spontaneity and freedom.

The main subject of the book by Benjamin Preciado-Solis (1984) is the stories of Kṛṣṇa, particularly those recording his heroic achievements, their origins and their formation, the themes and motifs that constitute them, and their representation both in art and literature up to the tenth century A.D. Preciado-Solis begins with the assumption that the legend of Kṛṣṇa presents a great array of themes and motifs similar, and very probably related, to those in the folklore and myth of other parts of Asia and even some parts of Europe. He further maintains that motifs, long current in Indian folklore, were used in the Kṛṣṇa cycle. He therefore proposes to examine the problem from the point of view of comparative folkloristics and traces the presence of themes and motifs of the Kṛṣṇa cycle in a series of somewhat similar stories in the Mediterranean area and the Middle East as well as in ancient India, many centuries before the legends of Kṛṣṇa, as we know them, were complied. For this purpose Preciado-Solis undertakes to apply the methods of content analysis as used by modern folklorists and suggests that instead of taking on the delicate task of interpretation of myths, it is far more practicable and useful simply to present the themes and motifs found in the legends and to analyse them in order to discover the narrative patterns peculiar to the Kṛṣṇa saga.

According to Preciado-Solis, a story type is a recurrent feature or episode of traditional stories and a motif, after Stith-Thompson, is the smallest element in a tale which has the power to presist in tradition, so that they are used synony-

mously in the book. He then proceeds to discuss the basic pattern of the hero stories as exemplified by von Hahn, Otto Rank and Lord Raglan and shows how the Kṛṣṇa legend suits almost point by point all three schemes presented by them. The wide number of coincidences following a general pattern having been amply demonstrated, Preciado-Solis then takes some of the most characteristic episodes in the cycle of Kṛṣṇa, compares them with similar ones in the stories of two heroes - Indra from the Indian and Herakles from the Greco-Roman tradition.

I have chosen to summarize Preciado-Solis' analysis of what he calls the most characteristic set of themes in the life of the hero, the monster killer. Among the many enemies vanquished by Kṛṣṇa three in particular seem to have captivated the popular imagination more than the others : the quelling of the serpent Kāliya, the killing of the demon horse Keśin and the killing of the bull Ariṣṭa. The cumulative evidence suggest that the victory over a bull is one of Kṛṣṇa's most important feats. Indra is also said to have fought and defeated a quadruped, probably a bull or perhaps a horse. Herakles on his part defeated Achelous who assumed the likeness of a bull in very similar circumstances to those met by Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's killing of Keśi also follows the same pattern as Herakles' battle against Diomedes' horse. For a comparison between Kṛṣṇa's *Kāliyadamana* and slaying of the dragon by Herakles, Preciado-Solis uses Fontenrose's themes of the combat myth under ten headings and shows that both the stories broadly fulfil all these requirements and even some of the fine details contained in the subheadings. But the really amazing resemblance is between Kṛṣṇa's Bāna episode where he goes to Śoṇitapura (City of Blood) to get Bāṇa's wonderful cows and Herakles' Geryon episode where he goes to Erytheia (Red Island) to get Geryon's wonderful cows which, in the table drawn up by Preciado-Solis for the convenience of comparison, match each other in every little detail. He therefore argues that the number of coincidences is so high that we cannot attribute them to Kṛṣṇa's and Herakles' common membership of the class of the heroes and postulates the possibility of mutual influence resulting from direct contact. He claims that there was enough room for this contact beginning with the arrival

of the Greeks in northwest India with Alexander and continuing though regular commercial intercourse between Rome, Alexandria and India. He more concretely suggests that most probably mutual interchange of themes, motifs and even episodes started from the time that Megasthenes wrote about the worship of Herakles at Mathruā and continued till the last Roman trading posts were closed.

Viṣṇu, with all his *avatāra* ramifications, and particularly in the infinite variety of myths associated with his manifestation as Kṛṣṇa the child hero, the youthful lover and the keeper of *kṣatriya* conscience, perhaps lends himself more easily to mythological studies. The mythology of Śiva, in contrast, is an enigma, which portrays him as the great ascetic who is, at the same time, the god of the phallus. Mythologists must have found his stern austerity and excessive sexuality either too constricting or too baffling to penetrate, which may explain the surprising paucity of books on Śiva myths. There is no dearth of works on the history of Śaivite sects, scholarly tomes on the underlying philosophical premises of Śaivism continue to appear and even Śaivite mythology, especially in his Naṭarāja representation, is used to understand traditional Indian dance forms (Anne-Marie Gaston), but very little effort has gone into exploring Śiva, the erotic ascetic. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's book (1973) therefore remains an isolated example which examines a wide range of Indian texts—Vedic, Purāṇic, classical and modern—in the light of a dialectic pattern of interlocking motifs which centre upon the myths of the great ascetic Śiva and his erotic *alter ego* Kāma, to explain an enduring human dilemma : the conflict between spiritual aspirations and human desires.

O'Flaherty argues that from the Śaiva myths, first of all, there is something to be learned about the form and structure of the Hindu mythology and its relation to content, for Indian mythology impresses us with its apparent formlessness whose outlines constantly change. The staggering variety of Indian mythology is significant from the psychological standpoint. The recurrence and constant revision is in part a result of the long historical development and structural expansion of an oral tradition, but it may also reveal a preoccupation almost equivalent to what O'Flaherty calls a neurotic *idee fixe*. The

Hindus recognized a constant tension between the desire to sample every aspect of experience and the desire to exhaust at least one by plumbing its extreme depths. Thus every human action involves a choice, and every choice implies a loss. In the sphere of human society, the choice implicit in this conflict was simply denied by the caste system with its doctrine of one's own particular duty in life. But these frustrations are relieved in the myths, where Śiva embodies all of life, in all of its detail. He alone need make no choice; through him all of the conflicting challenges are accepted at once. Another structural element—the interplay of microcosmic and macrocosmic scales—may be formulated as a question: How can one fully savour the joys of the most trivial moments while remaining aware of cosmic and metaphysical dimension which threaten to reduce such moments to insignificance? O'Flaherty's answer to the question is a double vision of the myths which admits of both the possibilities. The formal points of repetition, variation, detail, and scale thus assume a dimension of content as well.

The myths structured in this way are of great importance to the Hindus, for they resolve certain contradictions that are logically irreconcilable. The corpus of Śaiva myths returns again and again to the age-old quandaries about the way in which men ought to live: How can one live in the world, enjoying the pleasures of life and perpetuating this in one's children, and yet renounce the world, thus freeing the spirit? In the recorded Indian religious speculation, different mythological figures emerged to catalyse these conflicts. In the Śaiva myths Śiva and Kāma interact and replace one another in such a way as to demonstrate the extraordinarily flexible state of mind which the Hindu mythmaker ultimately developed in his attempt to view simultaneously every possible solution to his dilemma. The combination of so many different facets of the paradox was made possible largely through the use of recurrent symbols. This process was facilitated by the manner in which Hindus tended to view as the interplay of natural powers, problems which we might see in moral, ethical or philosophical terms. These elemental powers influence divine and human individuals by embodying the impulses of passion, self-control, desire, anger, asceticism, and so on, and

they are constantly in flux. The control or transmutation of these forces may be seen at the cosmic level, where the continual interaction of the natural elements, primarily fire and water, animates the flow of vital forces within the universe. Each force must be allowed to develop to its extreme, and then a balance is sought by the rechannelling or transformation of any force which is out of control; in this way, the universe pulses from extreme to extreme like a pendulum. Since a perfect balance can never be reached, the pendulum can never be at rest, but moments of apparent peace occur from time to time as the wave crosses from one phase to another. On the symbolic level, these are the moments when the forces of fire and water are simultaneously present but not mutually destructive; on the divine level, these are the undertakings in which creative and destructive divinities reinforce one another; on the human level, these are the episodes in which ascetic and sexual impulses combine within an individual, each impulse allowed to develop the full expression of its power without impeding the expression of the contrasting impulse. These fleeting moments of balance provide no solution to the paradox of the myth, for Hindu mythology does not seek any true synthesis; the conflicting elements are resolved into a suspension rather than a solution. Indian mythology celebrates the idea that the universe is boundlessly various, that everything occurs simultaneously, that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other. In many myths Śiva is merely erotic or merely ascetic, as a momentary view of one phase or another. But in the great myths, transcending the limits of mundane causality, he participates in cycles of cosmic dimensions which melt into a single image as they become ever more frequent. The conflict is resolved not into a static icon but rather into the constant motion of the pendulum, whose animating force is the eternal paradox of the myths.

Brahmā dropped out of active worship fairly early in his career and yet retained his position of eminence in the world of mythology. Sukumari Bhattacharji (1970) had carefully worked out the functional antecedents and the evolution of the concept in her chapter on Brahmā, but the three independent studies on Brahmā offer confusing and pallid explanations of

Brahmā's history and status (Tarapada Bhattacharya; Mohammad Israil Khan; and S. P. Basu,). In the backdrop of existing scholarship on the subject, Greg Bailey (1983) has succeeded in bringing the enormous range and diverse nature of data on Brahmā within one interpretative framework. Bailey argues that from its incipient period Hinduism has been constituted of three fundamental features: *bhakti* and its attendant theistic movements centred around gods like Viṣṇu and Śiva; many different ascetic movements all expressing a pessimistic attitude towards existence; and ritualist worldview which is a continuity of the socio-religious values of the *Vedas*. Each feature is manifested as a specific set of values, a particular life style and a collective of religious practices. Together they underlie and give coherence to the many myths which form the subject of Bailey's book. The myths and didactic literature reveal that there was a fundamental conflict ideologically and socially between ritualism and asceticism, which Bailey calls *pravṛttidharma* and *nivṛttidharma* respectively, a conflict resulting from the fact that they are based upon categorically opposed assumptions about the nature of existence.

Bailey has concentrated on ritualism because the set of values associated with it provide, according to him, the best analytical frame for Brahmā's role in mythology. The set of values called *pravṛtti* lends itself to characterization on several levels. On the religious level it is characterized by the centrality attributed to ritual as a means of sustaining life and demarcating the relationships between beings in the triple world. On the sociological level it is characterized by belief in the predominance of hierarchy as a principle of organization pertinent to beings, and of interdependence between those groups of which the hierarchy is constituted. Finally, at the metaphysical level, the prevailing characteristic is a kind of particularism best expressed in the notion of *ahaṁkāra* (meaning — sense of the ego), that which causes the mind/body to consider itself ultimately real and different from all other things. Each of these levels can be discerned operating in Brahmā's mythology simultaneously. The religious level is explicit in his apotheosis of the role of the *brāhmaṇa* householder, in which role he disseminates *dharma* and ensures that

it remains the prevalent norm of behaviour. On the sociological level, he is motivated to preserve the harmonious order between the respective hierarchies of beings he has established, from the threat of anyone refusing to perform the role dictated by their *svadharma*. On the metaphysical level his identity with *ahaṁkāra* marks him as a being whose attitude towards existence in the triple world is positive, but whose desires are centred on worldly concerns.

All these made Brahmā a total symbol of *pravṛtti* values and herein lies his distinctiveness in Indian mythology. Viṣṇu and Śiva are gods with broader capacities, and the roles they perform symbolize both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* values.[4] The view of existence based on *pravṛtti* value is an optimistic and positive one, yet it is gained only at the expense of individual freedom. In accordance with this view each person has an ordained role determined by the group into which he or she is born. Outside of his group the individual has no identity. Brahmā himself epitomizes this bondage to a role when *kalpa* after *kalpa* he is reborn into the position of the creator of the universe along with all the constructive and predictable activities this implies. However, in the texts, which clearly reflect these values, there are some unmistakable signs of doubt about the stability and consolidation of beings in the triple world. In mythology, Bailey argues, this stability appears at the most to be a fragile one. The ease with which the triple world can be plunged into disorder of a type redolent of pre-creation state, an ubiquitous motif in Hindu mythology, is one

4 The sets of values associated with life in orthoprax caste society and world-renunciation are referred to in the Hindu texts as *pravṛttidharma* and *nivṛttidharma* respectively. The worldview designated by the term *pravṛttidharma* visualizes a universe of three connected worlds, each containing distinct groups of beings performing distinct roles. The organization of this triple world is based on functional interdependence which is also duplicated at the level of society. In both society and the triple world each group has its own role (*svadharma*) to perform, and if this role is not performed is threatened. This interdependent triple world rests firmly on the pivot of the ritual (*karma*). *Nivṛttidharma* may be said to be in most ways the opposite of *pravṛttidharma*. Those who adhere to *nivṛttidharma* are renouncers who recognize no real spatial or temporal limits, except those which are self-imposed. Their aim is to realize *mokṣa*. Once *mokṣa* is attained, rebirth does not take place.

sign of fragility. Creation is order and delimitation, pre-creation is a lack of any defining limits. There were a number of consequences arising out of this fragility. One of these consequences manifested itself in the tremendous importance placed on mediatory figures.

In Hindu mythology the mediator is often a figure who embodies *dharma*, the king and the brahmin, for example. The king is able to mediate between ascetic and non-ascetic and between the three *varṇas*. The brahmin mediates between men, gods and demons. As if combining within himself the position of king and brahmin, Brahmā mediates between men and gods, men and earth, men and men, gods and demons, Viṣṇu and the gods and sometimes Śiva and the gods. This must be because he combines in himself so many of the dualities which exist in his creation, yet at the same time is identical with its ultimate standard—*dharma*. Another consequence of this fragility was the attacks and criticisms made on the ritualist worldview by the various ascetic movements which espoused *nivṛttidharma*. Though socially fragmented, they were ideologically unified. They took this fragility of the world order to its logical conclusion, arguing that existence in such a universe was unsatisfactory in every way, insecure and unstable.

Bailey attempts to reconcile the ascetic and the positive set of values in terms of *bhakti*. He argues that the world view of ritualism continued to provide the ethos for most Hindus in spite of the attacks made upon it by the ascetic movements, but it was a new form of ritualism much modified by the ideology of *bhakti*. Bailey says that *bhakti* was basically eclectic which borrowed from both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛttidharma*, and this had wider acceptability. The net effect of its prodigious growth of popularity was revitalization of the ritualist worldview. Doctrinally *bhakti* affected a reinterpretation of sacrifice and renunciation which henceforth made them identical. According to this reinterpretation, which was expressed in the doctrine of *karmayoga*, *karma* was understood as ritual and the performance of one's *svadharma* was in the spirit of the renouncer. Actions were not performed from a need to fulfil a desire, but as an act of devotion to God. Bailey seems to conclude with the view that Brahmā thus succeeded in

partially retaining his importance within the divine hierarchy, albeit with some reservation.

Considering the wealth and diversity of material, significant studies of ancient Indian mythology are very few and in terms of meaningful application of available theories of interpretation, still fewer. The books just discussed are some of the better examples where attempts have been made to arrange a varied range of information within an interpretative framework to arrive at generalizations which then transcend their immediate contexts. For example, Bailey's book is a statement on the two fundamental value systems of ancient Indian society, perceived through the role of Brahmā in mythology. Similarly, O'Flaherty's painstaking textual study of the mythology of Śiva is really about the interaction between two polar attitudes in a continuum which were intrinsic to the ancient Hindu worldview. The two studies on Kṛṣṇa focus sharply on two social indicators of the Hindu cultural matrix—the divine player and the prodigious hero—and at the same time represent attempts to draw upon data from comparative developments in other cultures. As a result, however, all these studies suffer from the common tendency of trying to accommodate multiple facets of an important Hindu deity within a single set of reasoning. For instance, Bailey's reconstruction of the nature of Brahmā fits in so precisely with the function of the trinity in Hindu mythology that the entire scheme appears to have been rationally preconceived. But the evolution of an enormous corpus of so nebulous a discourse as myths must inevitably leave behind irreconcilable inconsistencies and any attempt to capture their multivalence within one neat set of arguments renders it somewhat vulnerable. Thus a historian would necessarily wonder why there is no evidence of Brahmā ever receiving royal patronage when the king is the human repository of *pravṛtti* value on earth.

Most of these recent books, while commendable studies of mythology in themselves, often betray a disjunction with the historical perspective. It is particularly noticeable in O'Flaherty who, in her enthusiasm to "extract meanings without *reducing the myths*" (p. 2), has accepted Lévi-Strauss' structuralist treatment of all versions of a myth, including the contemporary ones, as equally relevant. Structuralist quest for meaning

is largely confined to the formal relations of mythical structures without explicit reference to historical, social or cultural contexts. But once the meaning of a myth or a mythological pattern is established, a historian is required to locate that meaning in the situational context to see whether it corresponds to the overall pattern of historical development, which endeavour is largely absent in O'Flaherty. Since then she is advocating a 'tool-box approach' to the study of myths which involves carrying about as wide a range of method-ological tools as possible and employing the one that is best suited to the material at hand, rather than adhering to one particular approach (1981). Even with this pluralism, however, her neglect of the historical perspective persists. Kinsley, too, while recognizing that play is not a classic feature of the divine in all religions, but is typical of the gods in Hinduism, refuses to offer an explanation of the historical specificity of the Indian situation. Hence Kinsley's conclusion that "there is in man an eternal child" whose restless spirit finds fulfilment in play appears unconvincing, for if the explanation is so universal it should be manifest in all the other religions with the same degree of variety, intensity and significance. Preciado-Solis, on the other hand, stresses the comparative aspects of the hero stories across cultures so much that he nearly submits to the theroy of diffusion. He grants that both the Kṛṣṇa and the Herakles stories grew separately, both having antecendents in their own tradition and states clearly that "Kṛṣṇa is not Herakles", but at the same time wonders "where the hero story originates or how it spread to so many countries." Hero stories are such a common motif in almost all the ancient cultures that they are easier to explain in terms of parallel development rather than through a place of common origin and subsequent diffusion. Where there is historical evidence of contacts between cultures having similar traditions, mutual borrowing is possible, almost inevitable, but it is hazardous to assess the precise degree of dependence of one on the other, as he tends to suggest with regard to the Bāna-Geryon episodes (p. 100). Despite these deficiencies, however, collectively these studies make a distinct advance on the text-historical approach of the earlier generation.

Deity is central to any religious complex which has myths

and rituals as its basic features. As the nature and attributes of the deity are best exemplified through its mythology, this section will necessarily have a certain overlap with the previous one, except that here I will concentrate on an area which has claimed considerable attention in recent historiography on ancient Indian religion—the goddess tradition. Hindu society is overwhelmingly patriarchal and overarching structures in Indian religion have also tended to be conceived in male terms. A traditional scheme that was devised to encompass the major forms of divinity listed three males—Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā, but gradually Brahmā gave way to the goddess who thus came to acquire her position of supremacy in the Hindu divine hierarchy along with the two other members of the Trinity. Her distinctive force lies in the fact that she is not structure itself, she is rather the condition that makes structure possible. Without her the non-entities in *dharma's* complex equation would wander inert; she gives them life by connecting them. She relates and mediates. From Ernest Payne's book on the Śāktas in 1933 to J. N. Tiwari's study of the Mahādevī in 1985 a lot of work has been done on the goddess cult, but particularly so in the last few years. I have selected two monographs from them for brief review, not so much for their exposition of the nature of the goddess as the two distinct methodological approaches to the subject that they display.

Thomas B. Coburn (1984) in his *Devī Māhātmya*, which is a section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, composed around the sixth century A.D. and is the first comprehensive account of the goddess in Sanskrit, has explored how an anonymous Sanskrit text articulates a view of ultimate reality as feminine when there is virtually no precedent in the Sanskrit tradition for such a view. To accomplish this task Coburn has devised a method of scriptural analysis which he himself defines as eclectic. His foremost emphasis is on the fact that the *Devī Māhātmya* is the first instance of an originally non-Aryan vision of the divine to appear in Sanskrit. He aruges that because Sanskritic culture is a symbol, it is not possible to circumscribe it, but it is feasible to speak of 'Sanskritization' as a literary phenomenon that reflects appreciation of a social, cultural, religious norm. Coburn then investigates the nature

of the *Purāṇas* along with the issues raised by the academic
study of them. Hindus look upon the *Purāṇas* as a confirming
elaboration of the *Vedas*. Coburn admits that academic inquiry
into the Purāṇic corpus is a complex matter, but it is possible
to historically investigate the cumulative Vedic-Sanskritic
tradition in a way that illuminates one expression of the faith,
namely, the *Devī Māhātmya*, while respecting others.

It is significant that the *Devī Māhātmya* is not simply a
portion of a *Purāṇa* but has led an independent life of its own.
In terms of function, Coburn notes, it has a liturgical
involvement and devotional role which resembles that of the
ṛg Veda, thus lending to the *Devī Māhātmya* a particularly vital
rapport with the Vedic tradition. This has necessitated an
examination of how such works are composed. Coburn argues
that negatively, bardic theories of oral composition require
modification in the Indian context as they lead the historian
away from the devotional core of the text, the hymns. But
positively, the Indian authors' emphasis upon religious factors
led them to pay particular attention to different units of
composition, such as the epithets of the goddess, which admits
of historical investigation throughout the Vedic corpus. There-
fore, the resulting structure builds towards an appreciation of
the hymns in their original setting. He examines the Sanskrit
resonance of the *Devī Māhātmya*'s epithets, goes on to the epics
and early Purāṇic material to trace the previously discreet
myths that the *Devī Māhātmya* integratively associates with the
goddess, and finally presents annotated translations of hymns
connected with the goddess from the *Ṛg Veda* to the *Devī
Māhātmya*. Coburn thus shows how the *Devī Māhātmya*, in its
content, is the culmination of a long preceding process.

Wendell C. Beane's (1977) study of myth, cult and symbols
in Śākta Hinduism, in contrast, is an elaborate phenomenologi-
cal study, which is based on a few selected Purāṇic and
Tantric texts. Beane is primarily concerned with an apprecia-
tion of the subtle nuances and multivalent significance of the
goddess as a religious symbol. He reviews the archaeological
evidence from the Indus valley and later sites, suggests several
linguistic affinities between Sanskritic names for the goddess
and Dravidian languages and provides a brief review of the
Sanskritic   passages   which   contribute   to   the   mature

conceptualization of the goddess. But the major thrust of Beane's work is to discern three basic structures—a cosmic mythic (Kālī-Śakti), a rituo-cultic (Kālī-pūjā) and an eschato-symbolic (Kali-yuga) with reference to the goddess. The unification of structures is illustrated through the use of literary, liturgical and linguistic symbols. In the case of cosmological structure, Beane argues that there tends to be a monistic substratum of reality which corresponds to the Absolute. This Absolute would seem to linger in the background of all forms and activities of many divinities; and it helps to explain how it is possible for the demons to gain great power through the gods themselves. Cosmologically, the significant point here is that, though the boons granted have apparently some providential basis, one can hardly avoid the impression that once attained, such boons of power have some perpetuity of their own even if it is not unlimited. Power, however, may be superseded, but it must be met with more power.

In terms of the rituological structure, which finds its focus in the Durgā-Kālī pūjā, Beane sees the existence of a chronological-astrological unification that takes the form of an autumnal equinoctial period. This period is homologized with the Great Time. It is a time for the vital coincidence of sacred reality and sacred action, when the devotee might be spiritually victorious in time, but its ultimate purpose is the transcendence of time itself. The eschatological structure, Beane believes, is disclosed in paradigmatic fashion in the goddess-demon conflict. The conflict, which occurs in great violence and disorder, seems to take place as if during the final and most intensive phase of the Kali-yuga. The universe lingered, therefore, in groaning anticipation of another cosmic day in the form of regeneration and another beginning of time. Beane's conclusion about the foregoing structure is their theoretical and practical co-inherence. Each of them is contained both explicitly and implicitly in the other; that is, the integration of the cosmological, rituological and eschatological structures correspond to the unification of the Trimurti's functional symbolization as creation, preservation and destruction. These structures find a perennial nodus in the devāsura theme, which, to some degree, testifies to the phenomenon of

Vedic-Purāṇic-Tāntric continuity.

From a historian's point of view, the weakness of Beane's work is his indifferent source base, which is partially due to the demands of his method. Beane is concerned with the almost trans-historical understanding of an all-India religious archetype, rather than the historical, contextual understanding of a deity or a text which have played their respective roles in the elaboration of that archetype. The difference between Coburn and Beane may be seen as a manifestation of a difference between the phenomenological and the historical approaches. Coburn's limitation, on the other hand, is the regional anonymity of his source. As a result, despite his proclaimed historical approach, he has to treat Sanskritization as a literary phenomenon and disregard the larger issues that the process of Sanskritization involves. Coburn's systematic review of the Sanskritic antecedents of the *Devī Māhātmya* motif is thus reduced to the study of the evolution of a religious tradition, in isolation of the complex socio-economic forces which to a great extent determine the nature of that tradition.

John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff have edited a collection of articles (1984) which examines the range of roles the goddess plays in Hindu religion. These articles comprise two main groups. Those in the first seek to describe and evaluate Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's cowherdess lover and consort. Many devotees consider her co-equal or even superior to Kṛṣṇa and thus in a unique way she raises the question of the special role of the goddess. The second group of essays extends the range of discussion beyond Rādhā, with each essay another female divinity from the Indian spectrum makes her appearance. Some are consorts and some are primarily thought of as independent. Those that come from south India tend to be defined as consorts. The goddesses of north and northeast India, by contrast, reflect a more volatile association with men. They tend to be much less moderate in their characteristics than their southern counterparts, mixing total rage with total compassion, and their relation to their consorts is looser.

Three essays of general import conclude the discussion. David Wulff provides a framework for comprehending the

psychological process that underlies Indian goddess figures, particularly the polarization of good and bad in infantile conceptions of the mother and the Jungian distinction between the anima and the mother archetype. Marglin derives a tripartite classification of types of sexual union from her fieldwork in Puri and offers them as a possible scheme for sorting out various kinds of consort relationships. A. K. Ramanujan shifts the ground from the divine to the human plane and analyses the experiences of female saints. This is the best one volume introduction to the variety of goddess cults in ancient India.

Little attention has been paid to Buddhist studies so far, mainly because so little work has been done on the subject in the last two decades, particularly from the religious point of view. The more notable studies attempt to relate Buddhism with the existing socio-economic milieu, such as R. S. Sharma's analysis of the origin of Buddhism or A. K. Warder's effort to seek correspondence between feudalism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Uma Chakravarti's study of the social dimensions of early Buddhism (1987) is an important addition which synthesizes the insights of the previous works and throws fresh light on the role of the *gahapatis* in the growth of early Buddhism. One should also mention N. R. Guseva's presentation of historical and ethnic roots of Jainism in this connection.

The same, however, cannot be said of another area of study which I have more or less completely neglected—religion and society in early south India. In fact there has been such an explosive productivity in this area of inquiry, particuarly in north America, since 1970 that it deserves a separate review article on the subject, which, due to constraint of space I am unable to do. It is nevertheless necessary to present a synoptic glimpse of the major developmental trends. The work done in recent years has been organized in terms of three significant areas by F. W. Clothey. The first is that of literary and textual studies which have a direct bearing on the understanding of religion in south India. Jean Filliozat's work is unfortunately not available to the English-speaking readers, but Ramanujan's translation of *vacanas* of four major saints of the *bhakti* protest movement of the tenth century A.D., is one of the finest

invitations to the study of the subject. H. Daniel Smith's descriptive bibliography and summation of some thirty Pañcarātrāgamic texts provides a useful reference to the basic canons of the Vaiṣṇava ritual tradition as practised in south India. Glenn Yocum discusses themes in the writings of the significant Tamil poet Māṇikkavacakār which became basic to the Śaiva *bhakti* tradition. Although it contains no translation, David Shulman's study of the Tamil temple myths (1980) selectively examines. an extensive collection of *talapurāṇas*, compiled from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Thematically organized into such considerations as the Goddess, the land, and sacrifice, Shulman's book uncovers two persistent themes : the approach to power in all its manifestations, and the attempt to reconcile contact with power with the desire for purity. One might wish that his study was more ethnographically based or the myths more frequently linked to specific ritual traditions, but the volume nevertheless remains a basic resource for those who seek to understand Tamil temple structure.

In the area of interdisciplinary study of religion, particularly from the point of view of anthropology and sociology, much work has been done in recent years. Arjun Appadorai and Carol Breckenridge especially discuss the relationships that existed in medieval and pre-modern Śri-Vaiṣṇavism between sectarian leaders, landowners and kings; the role of the temple as investment and storage centres in medieval Tamil Nadu; the relationships between gift-giving and ritual and the political use and implications of the festival even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The third major category of work may be called studies of religious phenomena, that is, studies of particular religious institutions or deities in south India. There have been interesting studies of Murukan by Clothey, of the cult of Draupadi by Alf Hiltebeitel, to say nothing of the works on Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, some· of which I have already mentioned. A good example of the rigour and scholarship of some of these works is John Carman's study of the theology of Ramanujan. Friedhelm Hardy's study of the early history of Kṛṣṇa devotion in south India (1983) is an excellent example of the comingling of theology and history. Hardy

discusses on the one hand the theoretical moorings of the *bhakti* with sensitivity and precision and on the other traces the spread of the *bhakti* movement in the north as a result of the impetus given by the Tamil saints. Mention should also be made of R. Champakalakshmi's study of the Vaiṣṇava iconography of the Tamil country (1981) which traces the evolution of the iconographic form through the folk movements and integration of tribal cults of pre-Pallavan centuries.

This new history of religion, if it may be so described, has achieved much, considering the brief period of its existence. It has moved away from the conventional narrative religious history and has emphasized the necessity of an analytical frame for processing the enormous data to arrive at a generalization. But it still has a long way to go. The problem of the social organization of tradition has to be looked into regionally and over a period of time, particularly the brahmanical restructuring which has been characterized as the universal process in Indian civilization by David Shulman. The several levels of Hinduism also need to be structurally linked rather than analytically isolated. At the same time, the new historian must not ignore the contribution of the old. It will be unwise to lose sight of the fact that the recent approaches have partly been made possible as a result of the stupendous scholarship of historians like R. C. Hazra (1940) on whose dating of the Purāṇic texts historians still depend. The separate discipline of history of religion, as conceived by Mircea Eliade, has not quite arrived in India, but it is on its way. If the transhistorical symbols, that the Eliade inspired studies are bound to throw up, are to appear meaningful at all, we must first be prepared with an understanding of the immense variety of religious behaviour together with their underpinnings.

References

This is a set of recommended readings which are illustrative of the different strands of historiography discussed in the chapter. This is neither an exhaustive bibiography, nor even a catalogue of all books and articles mentioned in the chapter.

Babb Lawrence A. 1975. *The Divine Hierarchy : Popular Hinduism*

in Central India (New York : Columbia University Press).

Bailey Greg 1983. *The Mythology of Brahmā* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Beane Wendell C. 1977. *Myth, Cults and Symbols in Śākta Hinduism : A Study of the Indian Mother Goddess* (Leiden : E. J. Brill).

Bhattacharji Sukumari 1978. *The Indian Theogony : A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology from the Vedas to the Purāṇas* (Calcutta : Firma KLM).

Bhattacharyya N. N. 1975. *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Contents* (Delhi : Manohar).

Chakravorti Uma 1987. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Champakalakshmi R. 1981. *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country* (Delhi : Orient Longman).

Chattopadhyaya Debi Prasad 1978. *Lokāyata : A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (Delhi : People's Publishing House).

Coburn Thomas B. 1984. *Devī Māhātmya : The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Courtright Paul B. 1985. *Gaṇeśa : Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (New York : Oxford University Press).

Dandekar R. N. 1979. *Vedic Mythological Tracts* (Delhi : Ajanta).

Eliade Mircea 1969. "The History of Religion in Retrospect; 1912 and After." In *The Quest : History of Meaning in Religion* (Chicago : Chicago University Press).

Eschmann A., Kulke H. and Tripathi G. C. (eds.) 1978. *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (Delhi : Manohar).

Gonda J. 1954. *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht N.V.A. : Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij).

———— 1980. *Vedic Ritual : The non-solemn Rites* (Leiden : E. J. Brill).

Goswami Asha 1984. *Kṛṣṇa-kathā and Allied Matters* (Delhi : B. R. Publication).

Hardy Friedhelm 1983. *Viraha-Bhakti : The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Hawley John Stratton and Wulff Donna Marie (eds.) 1984. *The Divine Consort : Rādhā and the Goddesses of India* (Delhi :

Motilal Banarsidass).

Hazra R. C. 1975 (originally published in 1940). *Studies in the Purānic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Heesterman J. C. 1985. "Vedic Sacrifice and Transcendance." In *The Inner Conflict of Tradition : Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Jaiswal Suvira 1981. *The Origin and Development of Vaisṇavism* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Kakar Sudhir 1978. *The Inner World : A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Kinsley David R. 1979. *The Divine Player : A Study of Kṛṣṇa Līlā* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Kosambi D. D. 1962. *Myth and Reality : Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan).

Kosambi D. D. and Gokhale V. V. (eds.) 1957. *The Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (Cambridge Mass : Harvard University Press).

Majumdar B. B. 1969. *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta).

Malamoud Charles 1988. "Paths of the Knife : Carving up the Victim in Vedic Sacrifice." In Richard F. Gombrich ed., *Indian Ritual and its Exegesis*, Oxford University Papers on India, vol.2, part I (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Masson J. Moussaieff 1980. *The Oceanic Feeling : The Origins of Religious Sentiment in Ancient India* (Dordrecht : Reidel Publishing Co.).

Nandi R. N. 1986. *Social Roots of Religion in Ancient India* (Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi).

O'Flaherty Wendy Doniger 1973. *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

—— 1981. *Sexual Metaphors and Animal Symbols in Indian Mythology* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Östör Akös 1980. *The Play of the Gods : Locality, Ideology, Structure and Time in the Festivals of Bengali Town* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press).

Preciado-Solis Benjamin 1984. *The Kṛṣṇa Cycle in the Purāṇas : Themes and Motifs in a Heroic Saga* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Shulman David 1980. *Tamil Temple Myths* (Princeton, N. J:
    Princeton University Press).
Singer Milton (ed.) 1966. *Kṛṣṇa : Myths, Rites and Attitudes*
    (Honolulu : East-West Centre Press).
Staal Frits (ed.) 1983. *Agni : The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*,
    2 vols. (Berkeley : Asian Humanities Press).
Wadley Susan Snow 1975. *Shakti : Power in the Conceptual
    Structure of Karimpur Religion* (Chicago : Department of
    Anthropology, University of Chicago).
Yadav B. N. S. 1973. *Society and Culture in Northern India in
    the Twelfth Century* (Allahabad : Central Book Depot).

VI

The Beginnings of the Historic
Period : The Tamil South
(Up to the end of the fifth century A. D.)

RAJAN GURUKKAL

This chapter attempts a historiographic analysis of the works
on early south India, published during the last few decades.
It begins with observations on how historians have been
variously characterizing iron age society. The shift from the
practice of identifying cultures and ethnic groups in associa-
tion with each major source category to that of the integrated
utilization of the varied source categories is a significant
historiographic development. This leads to a closer look at the
ancient Tamil anthologies, one of the major sources, for
highlighting the modern methods of textual analysis as applied
to them by historians. An interpretative aspect of the
anthologies, the *tiṇai* concept which has been evoking insight-
ful responses among modern historians is examined. Then the
question of kinship, its dissolution, emergence of the institu-
tion of caste and social division of labour is reviewed. The
nature of contemporary exchange, both internal and external,
and its impact on the society constitute the subsequent theme
of analysis. This is followed by a discussion on the institutions
of gift and redistribution in the context of collective appropria-
tion of resources. It is then shown how in the light of the
concept of redistribution, cattle raids and plunder are
reinterpreted. The effects of plunder on agricultural production
which indicate the domination of the pastoral economy, have
been discussed as the first step towards the characterization
of contemporary social formation. Subsequently the develop-
ment of interest among historians in the characterization of the

social formation and political structure has been examined. The following sections deal with observations on the question of prime movers that brought about the dissolution of the social formation. The dawn of history in the Tamil south as elsewhere in peninsular India, is marked by the diffusion of diverse strands of the Black and Red Ware (BRW), noted for the use of a variety of iron artefacts. Identified as megalithic culture, this has been treated as a specific single culture type in the past writings on early south Indian history. New excavations and case studies of the region over the last three decades have considerably widened our knowledge about the different strands of culture and their pattern of distribution (Rao 1972, Sundara 1975, Narasimaiah 1980). Several questions transcending the usual range confined to typological, stratigraphical and chronological issues have been raised and attempts made at identifying the forms of subsistence, material culture and social organization (Leshnik 1974). The latter are now assumed to have become widespread in the Tamil south by the middle of the first millennium B.C., bringing about homogeneity and linguistic identity in the region (Maloney 1970, 1976).

There are no entirely new artefacts from recently excavated sites. The latter are mostly burials and very rarely habitation centres. Apart from the usual pottery types, beads, bangles, terra cotta and iron artefacts, some more copper and bronze objects have been recovered from the sites. Similarly a few shares are now added to the list of agricultural implements which included only hoes, shovels, sickles and spades. However, hunting tools generally dominate and agricultural implements are not only marginal but also almost entirely primitive, except in the case of the few ploughshares of a relatively later period. This marginal status of agrarian tools tends to reject the old assumption that it represented the culture of sedentary agriculturists. The alternative argument now put forth is that it could have been the culture of pastoralists and subsistence farmers (Leshnik 1974). Some scholars still continue to associate the culture with irrigated agriculture (Rao 1972) which is not altogether unlikely at a slightly later phase of its development. There is no consensus on the principal form of subsistence adopted by the people

behind the relics.

Evidence for craft production, structural activity in brick and some kind of exchange at certain sites have prompted some historians to associate them with the first phase of urban development in the south (Ritti 1978; Champakalakshmi 1982). The manifold iron artefacts; pottery types; beads of gold, silver, copper, horn blende, bone, glass, paste, terracotta and semi-precious stones, bangles of shell and so on presuppose the existence of at least a rudimentary form of specialization in craft production and some kind of exchange. Excavations at Kanchipuram, Kunnattur, Kaveripattinam, Uraiyur and Tirukkampuliyur have attested the beginning of brick constructions in the initial decades of the Christian era. All these sites seem to have grown upon the BRW level and some of them have yielded material denoting Roman contacts. The terra cotta spindle whorls and dye-vats recovered from certain sites indicate the level of textile technology and the manufacture of textiles. Excavations have exposed dye-vats and relics of glass which suggest that the place was a centre for the manufacture of textiles and glass objects respectively. But this is a disputed point. Controversies as to whether or not it was a manufacturing centre revolve round the identification of dye-vats and the existence of local glass industry. In the absence of a convincing alternative, the earlier identification still holds good. Similarly excavation at Nattamedu proves it to be a centre of glass industry. These were clearly Indo-Roman trading enclaves and appear to be more like stations of foreign merchants than urban centres with local bases (Champakalakshmi 1986). Compared to the Deccan, the number of trade stations in the Tamil region is marginal and there is a marked difference in the urban character of the centres in the two regions (Sharma 1987). However, we are not very clear yet about the nature of urban development and its link with the hinterland.

The tendency in the past writings on the early historic period in south India was to identify cultures and ethnic groups in association with the major source categories. Hence the identification of the megalithic people/culture or iron age people/culture based on the archaelogical source, association of heterodox religious groups with the early epigraphical

source, discovery of a maritime civilization behind the Graeco-Roman sources and numismatic evidence, and idea of the Sangam society/people based on the ancient Tamil anthologies. The archaeological source comprising a variety of burial types and funerary deposits like BRW and iron artefacts signified a specific ethnic group and culture known after the megaliths in earlier writings. Similarly the earliest post-Mauryan epigraphical material, that is, the Tamil brāhmī cave inscriptions signified the Jaina and Buddhist people. The Graeco-Roman accounts and Roman coins, at once indicated a civilized people engaged in long distance overseas trade. Ancient Tamil heroic poems represented a people and culture known after the Sangam, which was an academy of scholars who collected and redacted the poems into anthologies. Even while using evidence from the various categories of sources, the fact that all of them contain clues to the different phases of one and the same social formation, was not properly understood. The integrated utilization of the varied categories of sources in broad anthropological perspectives, is now gaining currency (Maloney 1970, Gurukkal 1989a, Seneviratne 1989). This approach is made possible by efforts on the corroboration of data in the varied sources, such as archaeology and literature (Champakalakshmi 1975-76).

One category among the sources that has received significant attention over the period under review is that of the ancient Tamil anthologies, popularly known as the Sangam literature, constituting a mine of information on the conditions of life around the beginning of the Christian era. *Eṭṭuttokai* (the eight anthologies) and *Pattupāṭṭu* (the ten idylls) are the two major groups of texts included in the corpus of Sangam literature. Some scholars have included *Tolkāppiam*, the Tamil grammatical treatise, *Patineṇkīlkaṇakku*, the eighteen didactical texts and *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*, the twin epics in the *Sangam* corpus (Subrahmanian 1966). Though the precise chronology of the literature is still an unsettled problem, there is a greater clarity about the time of the different anthologies (Kailasapathy 1968, Zvelebil 1973a, Hart 1975, Marr 1987). It has now become fairly well established that the poems are not contemporaneous with the Sangam age and that there is a time lag of three or four centuries between the composition

of the poems and their compilation into anthologies (Kailasapathy 1968). This has proved the usual expressions like Sangam age and Sangam culture used for denoting the period and culture of the poems as misnomers. Some scholars, however, still use these expressions though most have given them up. A few have tried to substitute the expressions with the term 'classical' in their writings with little or no explanation (Zvelebil 1973a, Stein 1980). Of the whole corpus of literature, the *Eṭṭuttokai* collection excluding *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* is considered the most archaic belonging to circa third century B.C. to third century A.D. (Kailasapathy 1968). Some of the idylls of *Pattupāṭṭu* collection, particularly the *āṟṟuppaṭai* literature and the *tiṇai pāṭṭu*, are also of closer antiquity (Zvelebil 1973a-1973b, Sivathamby 1974, Marr 1987). As regards the contents, contexts and historical veracity of the poems, modern researches have also made a substantial contribution. The methods and concepts tested and found valid elsewhere for analysing the structure and composition of comparable literature, have revolutionised our understanding of the anthologies (Chadwick and Chadwick 1940, Bowra 1966, Propp 1979). It has been recognized that the anthologies are heroic poems not free from the tradition of oral compositions characterized by formulaic diction, stock phrases, stylized expressions and the use of symbols for unconscious meaning (Kailasapathy 1968, Dubiansky 1980). Modifying this view of treating the whole corpus of heroic poems as part of an oral tradition, it has been argued that the megalithic oral poetry preceded the ancient Tamil poems (Hart 1975, 1978). Historians are now aware that they can hardly go by the apparent contents of the poems for writing history since the genuine meaning of the poems is shrouded in symbols and codes. The symbols and codes carry hidden meanings that are not apparent in a superficial reading. The hidden meanings relate not to the level of consciousness but to that of the unconscious and require the help of modern methods in folkloristics for decoding them. However, what the overall social context and the poetic contents signify is historical and therefore attempts are being made to identify signifiers in them. The most useful signifiers are those rendering clues to the subsistence pattern and social relations which are extremely important for the

reconstruction of the historical process of early society.

A notable achievement in the attempts at identifying signifiers from anthologies is the insightful interpretation of the concept of *tiṇai* according to which *Tamiḻakam* consisted of five *tiṇais* or physiographic divisions, namely, *kuṟiñci* (hilly backwoods), *pālai* (parched zone), *mullai* (pastoral tract), *marutam* (wet land) and *neital* (the littoral). It involves the description of inhabitants and their modes of adaptation in each *tiṇai*. This has been understood in the past as a mechanical compartmentalization of nature into five divisions, symbolically denoting the historical evolution from the primitive to the civilized in south India.[1] Following the commentators of the poems, historians had debated the actual sequential order of the five *tiṇais* and thought that the order denoted the human evolution in world history. Pioneering scholars like S. K. Aiyangar, P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar and K. V. Subrahmania Aiyer are among such historians (Subrahmanian 1966). Modern studies do not follow the versions of the commentators far removed from the period of the anthologies, but view the concept in a realistic perspective and take it as a reflection of reality, drawing support from the *āṟṟuppaṭai* literature and the existing physiography of the Tamil region (Sivathamby 1974, Gurukkal 1989a). The commentators writing on the compositions after many centuries, certainly had serious lexical problems with a large number of terms and expressions apart from their real context. They could view things only through a grammarian's eye searching for the rules and principles of poetics. What are socially symbolic in the poetics were beyond their comprehension. Without caring for these limitations of the commentators, historians often followed the interpretations given by them and lost sight of historical reality. The five-fold physiographic division which was a mere poetic concept to the commentators, thus hardly made any realistic sense to the historians even though they sought to make it historical. The division is now understood as part of the continuum in nature with the *tiṇais* that are interspersed and scattered in the region as overlapping segments with no

---

1 The terms 'primitive' and 'civilized' are used here to indicate primeval and evolved stages respectively, in the process of social development.

point of beginning or end.

The realistic interpretation of the *tiṇai* concept and poetic specifications about the nature, peoples and products of each *tiṇai* have generated ideas regarding contemporary economic activities (Sivathamby 1974). Taking *tiṇais* as micro-eco-zones of given modes of human adaptation, attempts have been made to ascertain the process of interaction and formation of macro-eco-zones (Seneviratne 1989). With a view to characterizing contemporary social formation, efforts have been made to identify the forms and forces of production in the *tiṇais* and to corroborate the inferences with clues in the other categories of sources (Gurukkal 1989a). From the poetic specifications such as hunting and gathering of the *kuṟiñci*, plundering and cattle lifting of the *pālai*, animal husbandry and shifting agriculture of the *mullai*, wetland agriculture of the *marutam* and fishing-cum-salt manufacturing of the *neital*, we can presume the forms of subsistence adopted by the peoples of the time. It has been understood that in the areas where *tiṇais* merged, the social groups as well as the forms of subsistence made a mixed appearance. People in the areas of *mullai-marutam* are found to have adopted a variety of crafts as their means of subsistence. Leaving aside the primitive forms of subsistence such as hunting and gathering and their extended forms such as fishing and plundering, it has become clear that there were four forms of material production, namely, animal husbandry, shifting cultivation, petty commodity production and plough agriculture (Gurukkal 1989a). There are archaeological pointers to all these forms of production, albeit without any precise dating of each one's commencement. The antiquity of plough agriculture in the absence of clear dating for the sites that have yielded ploughshares, is an elusive problem in the south. However, it has been argued that in the light of the *koḷuvāṇikan* of the Tamil Brāhmī label-inscription at Mankulam cave, referring to a dealer in *koḷu* (ploughshares), we are able to push the antiquity of the plough, at least in the Vaigai valley, to the second century B.C. (Nair 1977, Gurukkal 1989a). The use of the plough during the period of the poems is well attested by the numerous references in them.

In addition to the concept of *tiṇai*, the broad

physiographical division of the region into *vanpulam* (non-agrarian tracts) and *menpulam* (agrarian wet land) conceived by the poets and recognized by the people is also well taken in recent writings on ancient Tamil society as a pointer to the nature and extent of contemporary agriculture (Hart 1975, 1978, Gurukkal 1989a). It is now clear that the extent of wet land agriculture in the days of the poems was very limited and confined to small pockets of *menpulam* surrounded by large *vanpulam* tracts of inhospitable conditions (Hart 1975, 1978, Stein 1980). There is a consensus that a large majority of contemporary people took to dry land agriculture and animal husbandry. It is presumed that craft production was by and large attached to pastoral agriculturists. However, centres of plough agriculture must have sustained their own artisans and craftsmen as attached to the fringes of wet land.

Studies of kinship and its bearings on the relations of agricultural production have generated concepts providing insights into problems of social relations in the past (Levi-Strauss 1969, Trautman 1974, Meillassoux 1973). This has stimulated attempts at exploring the nature of kinship and its role as the basis of production relations in the society of the poems (Hart 1974, 1978, Gurukkal 1989a). The poems contain clues to the fact that the basis of contemporary relations of production was kinship. Primitive agriculture and animal husbandry which characterized society resorted only to the cooperative labour of affinal or agnatic kins, presupposing no evolved social division of labour. Even in plough agriculture the relations of production did not seem to have transcended the framework of kinship, though the forces of production presuppose some kind of social division of labour. However, references in the poems to potters performing ritual functions and bards, certain magico-religious rites, indicate that the division of labour was hardly mature and devoid of overlap in terms of functions. But the situation in a *brāhmaṇa* household was altogether different since *brāhmaṇas* were not cultivators by themselves and could hardly have carried out production without using non-kin labour. This would suggest that *brāhmaṇa* households in the period of the poems represented a new production system involving relations transcending the network of kinship as distinguished from the

order of the day. The novelty of the production system was that it was based on the relation between a group of non-cultivating people and cultivating clansmen. Kinship ceased to exist as the organizing factor since *brāhmaṇas* who had their own *gōtras* and *pravaras* were obviously outside the kinship nexus of local clansmen. Their alien status is indicated in the poems which address them as *vaṭamar*, literally the people from the north.

The question of caste in early South Indian society has been looked at afresh against the background of the findings on the nature of the contemporary social division of labour. Historians have always been trying to associate the institution of caste with the society of the poems, scarcely approving the *varṇa* system. The tendency has been to show that the caste system of the early Tamils was not based on the concept of the four *varṇas*, but on its own norms. It was argued that the four *kuṭis*—*pāṇan, paṟaiyan, tuṭiyan* and *kaṭampan*—mentioned in a poem, constituted the four castes of the region. However in the poem the term *kuṭi* means a settlement of people or a family of people, but not caste. Moreover, the poet is not referring to the general situation in the region, but only to that of the particular village where he was singing. *Pārppār* (seers), *aracar* (kings), *iṭaiyar* (cowherds) and *kuṟavar* (hunters) are the four castes according to a commentator of the anthologies. The reference in the *Tolkāppiam-porul* to the four castes as *antaṇar, aracar, vaṇikar* and *vēḷāḷar* has been shown as not corresponding to the four in the *varṇa* system for establishing the distinctive feature of the Tamil caste system. Most of the views in early historiography of south India confused the problem of caste by taking clan surnames for caste suffixes and juxtaposing them with the *varṇa* system. It has been clarified that the institution of caste was yet to characterize early Tamil society and what has been listed as castes by scholars in the past are clan names (Hart 1975, 1978). The poems show that *brāhmaṇas* were considered to be the high born in contemporary society, but there is no evidence for their total distancing from the folk as the purest in those days (Gurukkal 1989a). Paranar, a scholarly *brāhmaṇa* bard (*pulavar*) mentions that on his way to the court of Kantirak-ko, a hill chief, he had his food with the people of the forest and their hunter chief. Just

as ordinary bards (*pāṇar*), *brāhmaṇas* also freely moved with the folk, participating in collective dining and drinking.

The nature of interaction among social segments and the process of subsequent integration of the largely self-sustaining eco-zones have received some serious attention (Sivathamby 1974, 1976, Gurukkal 1989a). There are numerous references in the poems to the interaction of the *tiṇais* against one another in terms of material goods. Poems show that there were certain fixed points of exchange known as *āvaṇam* or *ankāṭi* where people from far off places came for exchange (*An.* 93 : 10, *Prp.* 68 : 10). The exchange was based on a kind of barter system, referred to in the poems as *noṭuttal*, which involved only the use-value of goods. Paddy was the medium of exchange in most of the cases and it was exchanged in terms of salt. By and large the circulation of goods was through hawkers and pedlars, besides the manufacturers themselves who exchanged their products at the production centres. *Umaṇar*, the dealers in salt had to cart the loads to distant places through difficult and inhospitable terrain and hence moved in caravan troops, mentioned in the poems as *cāttu* (*sārtha*) (*An.* 39 : 10; 167 : 7; 291 : 15). The Tamil region was part of the network of long distance exchange as well. Many specialist merchants frequented the region for collecting and exchanging goods. At important markets like Madurai and Puhar, merchants from distant regions and different cultures gathered for exchanges as described in *Maduraikkāñci* and *Paṭṭiṇappālai*. The role of the local merchants in long distance trade is not very clear since the evidence is quite scanty. A label inscription at the cave at Mankulam refers to *nikamattōr*, the members of *nikamam* at Vellarai, (near Tiruchirappalli), probably a body of traders located there. But this is hardly enough evidence to speak about local merchants and the nature of trade carried out by them. With the evidence of the hoards of coins, references to the *kalinkam* variety of silk in the poems, mention of the *māturam* variety of textiles and the *pāṇḍyakavāṭakam* variety of pearls in the *Arthaśāstra*, historians have been focusing too much on the inland trade of south India, without examining sufficiently the nature of contemporary exchanges. Modern writings referring to the question of exchanges during the period, cast serious doubts on the

relevance of the term trade in the context of exchange involving no notion of exchange-value and profit (Gurukkal 1989a).

This is particularly noticeable in the writings on the overseas exchange of the Tamils, often referred to as the extensive foreign trade of Tamilakam. Inspired by the notices of the Graeco-Roman geographers and navigators, and by the hoards of Roman coins, historians of south India imagined a civilization of the Tamils as old as eighteen hundred years. The archaelogical data from excavations and the literary references to *yavanas* bringing gold were all adduced to in such a mixed form as to support modern imaginative reconstruction. The implicit presumption has been that the Tamils benefited the most in these relations since the drain of gold from Rome to India had been in proportions alarming to the Romans as noted by Pliny. However, absence of clear evidence for the Tamils organizing overseas trade and controlling the traffic of goods, has been a problem. The silence of archaeology about the huge urban complexes described in *Maduraikkāñci* and *Paṭṭiṇappālai* has been another vexing problem. This has led to the assumption that South India prior to the inception of Roman trade was not a seat of civilization but on the contrary, the Roman trade acted as the catalyst for the genesis of its civilization (Maloney 1970). The generally unimpressive layers of the pre- and post-Roman periods and the evidence for structural activity, petty commodity production and foreign occupation in the layers of the Roman period at excavation sites seem to support the assumption.

With the publication of a body of literature specializing in discussion on the organization, operation and functions of trade, the perspectives on trade have undergone drastic modifications (Meillassoux 1971, Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff 1975). There is now considerable awareness of the overall context of trade in the historical process of social development. We are fairly sure of what necessitates and makes trade possible, how and when. The major prerequisites for a society to forge ahead in organizing trade are defined through a variety of comparative studies (Meillassoux 1971, Ratnagar 1981). These developments in the realm of knowl-

edge about the mechanisms of early trade have necessitated a thorough re-examination of the whole question of the so-called foreign trade of south India. Attempts have been made to re-examine the sources for the extant generalizations and assumptions around the nature of the foreign trade of South India.

The focus of the re-examination is on questions such as: What were the goods shipped from the Tamil region? Were they mainly raw materials or manufactured goods? What goods came into the region? Were they subsistence or luxury goods? Who organized and controlled the traffic of goods? What was the role of the Tamil merchants? What was the exact nature of exchange? We know that aromatics, pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves and such spices, a variety of wild fauna, wild woods like teak and sandal, certain cotton fabrics, precious stones, gems and pearls were the items shipped from the Tamil region. Obviously, most of these goods were obtained from nature. The goods that reached the Tamil coast from the Mediterranean were: Roman coins, topaz, thin clothing, antimony, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead and some quantity of wine and wheat, besides certain ceramics. Wine, wheat and ceramics were brought for the traders themselves who had to stay back for some time since the sailing of ships depended on the monsoon winds. Most of the trading centres had settlements of foreign merchants who stayed for longer durations. The Peutingarian Tables[2] mention a temple of Augustus situated on the west coast, which has not been corroborated by archaeological evidence or any other source. Of the incoming goods, it is well known that Roman gold ranked foremost and no doubt, it was a luxury object. Similarly, fine cloth, coral and topaz suggest the existence of a wealthy section requiring prestige goods. Depending on literary references, the dates of which are uncertain, attempts have been made to identify *paratavar*, the fishing and salt manufacturing people, as a consumer class (Maloney 1969). However, the chiefly families of the time could certainly have afforded luxury goods. Crude glass, tin, copper and lead were evidently raw materials for the local beads and bronze

2 See *Malabar Manual*, vol. I.

industries. But such items came in marginal quantities when compared to the gold and silver coins.

Who organized and controlled the traffic of goods has been discussed in relation to the level of contemporary social development and the nature of political power (Gurukkal 1989a, 1989b). It was a transitional society of diverse clans slowly dissolving into households with a political organization not basically different from that of chiefdoms. Long distance trade is not normally the affair of an economy of clans and households, but the activity of a society with surplus production, economic specialization, multiplicity of crafts, a group of full-time traders. There is no direct evidence nor indirect reason to believe that the contemporary set-up satisfied any of these attributes. This would lead us to the presumption that the local merchants had very little role in the organization of foreign trade. Evidence supports the coming of the foreign merchants with their own living requirements and security arrangements for the collection and shipping of goods.

It has been argued that the Tamils in those days had a fairly developed technology of ship building (Subrahmanian 1966, Singaravelu 1966, Pillai 1979). The early anthologies refer only to small boats like *pahṛi, ōtam, timil, paṭagu* and *ampi* which were used for local transport and fishing. References to sea going vessels called *marakkalam* are found only in later texts of about the sixth century A.D. onwards. The reference in the *Periplus* to large ships called *colandia* which make voyages to 'Chryse' and to the 'Ganges' has often been cited as evidence for advanced ship building in south India (Subrahmanian 1966). However, these are hardly sufficient indicators for assuming that local merchants had a significant role in the overseas trade of the time.

The question of the exact nature of overseas exchange has been examined in relation to the nature of inland exchanges in the region (Gurukkal 1989a). What has been fascinating to the historians was the commendable quantity of the pre-Mauryan punch-marked and Roman coins, discovered in hoards at different parts of the region. They have viewed the coins in terms of money and exchange in terms of profit. Hence the characterization of contemporary exchange as an

imbalanced trade with South India at the advantageous end. Pliny's reference to the anxiety of the Senate over the drain of gold owing to the fashion for eastern goods, has been enough for such a characterization. Pliny has made another reference [3] to goods from India being sold at a hundred times their original cost, which would mean that the quantum of gold that reached India was hundred times less than what the traders got. It should be noted that the traders were mostly Egyptians, Greeks, Arabs, Abyssinians and Persians. So the Roman anxiety over the drain of gold has also to be viewed from that angle. However, what is crucial is not the quantity of coins, but the nature of value attributed to them. It is anachronistic to presume that generally the Tamils in those days attributed money value to the coins since the very nature of their modes of exchange precluded it. Being use-value based exchanges of the barter type involving no notion of price and profit, they provided scope neither for the coins to function as a means of payment nor as a measure of value (Gurukkal 1989a).

Historians have assessed the impact of overseas exchange on the Tamil society in varying degrees. Some believe that the impact was substantial, leading to important changes in society, and others, just the contrary. With the presumption that overseas exchange could be a catalyst for major social developments, it has been surmised that in south India it triggered off the spark of civilization (Maloney 1970). It has been assumed that along with certain other internal factors, the overseas exchange relations of the period also had a significant role in the stabilization of the urban process, class formation and emergence of the state (Seneviratne 1989). Arguments against this position reside on the character of exchange that precluded the circulation of labour and capital (Gurukkal 1989a). Such exchange relations would hardly lead to any significant socio-economic or political changes. There is no evidence to show that the overseas exchange stimulated the transformation of contemporary economy and social relations. The inland merchants and manufacturers continued to be subsumed within the network of clan ties and kinship. They

3 *Natural History*, VI. 26.

do not seem to have acted as middlemen between the foreign merchants and the chiefs in the transaction of goods. The foreign merchants freely made use of the Tamil ports for the traffic of goods from the south-east Asian world as well with no involvement of native traders as middlemen (Maloney 1976). Without clear indications for the development of a trading group on equal footing with contemporary foreign merchants or for the growth of at least a group of competent middlemen, how do we consider the overseas exchange exerting a transforming impact on Tamil society? The overseas demand for south Indian muslin, beryl and pearls must certainly have stimulated their production, but we do not know to what extent. We are in the dark about who organized the production and what relations emerged. Certain clues in the poems would have us believe that the overseas demand for goods was hardly enough for generating relations of non-kin labour in the manufacturing sector. This defies assumption of any serious impact of overseas exchange on the society of the time.

Anthropological and historical studies on early forms of exchange have led to the increasing realization of the importance of certain institutions like gift giving, as a means of distribution (Thapar 1978, Gregory 1983). The institution of gift giving *(koṭai)* which is celebrated in the anthologies, has been examined in the context of the social distribution of resources. Since the resources were first pooled by the chiefs who subsequently reallocated them to their dependents, the concept of redistribution has been applied to explain the implications of the institution. The chiefs redistributed the resources among their kinsmen, bards, merchants and a variety of other dependents. It involved a determinate pattern of social relationships based on kinship and inter-personal relationships beyond kinship. Cattle and grain were the main resources that got redistributed, though bards claim to have received gifts of gold, elephants, chariots, gems and muslin. These claims are poetic motifs for extolling the munificence of heroes (Kailasapathy 1968). But it is not unlikely that on rare occasions the scholarly bards *(pulavar)* received such prestige goods as gifts. Lesser bards *(pāṇar)* normally received a meal, some grain or used clothes as a reward for their recitation.

Developing on the concept of redistribution, the context and meaning of raids by the chieftains of the time are re-interpreted (Gurukkal 1981, 1989a). In past writings, *veṭci* has been taken for a pre-war routine of protecting the enemy's cattle by lifting them. This understanding based on the description of *āṭamtōmpal* in *Tolkāppiam porul* has been rightly re-interpreted as cattle raid pure and simple (Narayanan 1977). *Veṭci* signifies all plunder raids in a society that was predominantly pastoral in character and it makes much sense in the context of redistribution because plunder was the instituted means for the chiefs to pool resources. Plunder as an essential economic function in a redistributive society has been well recognized by historians and anthropologists (Terray 1972, Sharma 1983). The anthologies are full of evidence of plunder raids through which the chiefs used to replenish their coffers which were constantly drained due to the incessant demands of redistribution. It has been shown that plunder and raids were fundamental to the maintenance of the contempo-rary redistributive economy (Gurukkal 1989a). Poetic concepts such as *veṭci* (cattle raid), *karantai* (cattle recovering), *vañci* (chieftain's attack), *kāñci* (defending) and *tumpai* (preparing for a raid) clearly illustrate how institutionalized were raids in contemporary society.

Some attempts have been made to assess the effects of plunder on agricultural production during this period (Gurukkal 1981). Destruction of settlements *(cēri)* and culti-vated fields *(kaḷani)* was part of the scorched earth policy in raids. The burning of agricultural settlements *(eriparanteṭuttal)* and crops was a routine act of the raiding chief. Plunder raids, destruction of agricultural settlements, dominance of the ideology of war and booty redistribution were utterly uncongenial to the development of wet land agriculture. Naturally, wet land agriculture failed to expand beyond small pockets of river plains and remained locked up in the large non-agrarian tracts. Despite the availability of iron and possession of its technology, advanced farming made no significant progress during the period. The need for frequent redistribution and the strain of raids should have acted as a compulsion on the chiefs to intensify production. But there is no evidence for chiefly initiative in the intensification of

production, except the tradition of Karikala Cōḷa building an *anicut*. Actually, the political organization of the time was rooted in the economy of primitive agriculture and animal husbandry which hardly suited advanced farming. This would suggest that wet land agriculture was yet to secure its conditions of development and expansion.

It is now being recognized through increasingly well-known studies in economic anthropology that social history has to be viewed in terms of social formation which is an ideological notion of development (Terray 1972, Godelier 1977, Friedman and Rowlands 1977). The concept of social formation presupposes conceiving historical societies in terms of their systems of production relations and structures of domination. In short, it means social analysis in terms of the concept of modes of production. Though it accepts established modes of production as marked stages of reference for identifying the level of social development, there is no quest for discovering them in any pure form. The focus is on the forces and relations of production and the resulting structure of society. Any rigorous analysis of a past society has to focus on the material process of production and the social process of appropriation so as to know how the society is structured and dominated. Material process means the process of appropriation of nature and social process of appropriation refers to the system of the distribution of produce. Tamil society of the early historic period has been viewed from the perspective of social formation and by way of examining its material and social processes of production and distribution, it has been discovered that there existed a combination of several forms of subsistence and a complex redistributive relationship of collective appropriation (Gurukkal 1989a). Primitive agriculture, animal husbandry, petty commodity production and plough agriculture have been identified as the principal forms of production, whose relations dominated and structured social formation. Any social formation in the past may be viewed as a combination of different forms of production structured by the dominance of one over the rest. The relations of the dominant form of production characterize the social formation through the process of interaction. The situation of diverse economies co-existing and interacting, has been conceived and

described without the framework of social formation also, where the notion of uneven development based on the potential for ecological adaptations, is the guideline (Seneviratne 1989). In this the concept of co-existence and interaction of several forms of production dominated and structured by the relations of one among them does not provide the basis of explanation. The notion of ecological zones and their suitability to resource development is the alternative framework adopted here.

There is a developing interest in the characterization of the political level within the social formation of early South India, an interest that has been kindled by the revealing studies on the process of state formation in early societies (Krader 1968, Service 1975, Claessen and Skalnik 1978, Thapar 1984, Claessen and Velde 1987). Now the problem can be approached with an enormous range of ideas about the preconditions, mechanisms and processes of the formation of state power in a pre-state society. The earliest phase in the process of state formation in the Tamil south has been identified in the proto-historic period with the emergence of micro-eco-zones or primary habitats of communities depending on the subsistence forms possible there, where the existence of clan based chieftains is envisaged (Seneviratne 1989). The five varieties of terrains *(tiṇais)* mentioned in the ancient Tamil poetics have been recognized as the basic eco-zones or macro-eco-zones. The formation of macro-eco-zones through the interaction of the micro-eco-zones is the next phase characterized by the emergence of larger chiefdoms. The final stage has been associated with the gradual integration of several macro-eco-zones into a larger primary region *(nāḍu)* in the early historic period witnessing the formation of the pristine state (Seneviratne 1989). The forces at work in the process of the formation of macro-regions and their integration have been identified as both internal and external, the former being economic and cultural factors and the latter, the influence of the Mauryan State and the northern socio-religious ideas and institutions. The influence of the Mauryan State on Tamil society has been established in the light of literary evidence particularly from the anthologies (Narayanan 1975a). But it is striking that there is virtually no Mauryan presence in the

archaeology of the region (Thapar 1973, 1988). The intrusion of northern social ideas and institutions is well attested again by the literary evidence. However, the role of such external factors in the process of state formation can hardly be significant when compared to the role of internal factors since the state is the result primarily of the internal dynamic (Krader 1968, Service 1975, Thapar 1984).

It remains uncertain whether the period really witnessed the whole process of transformation from pre-state to state society. Clues in the anthologies point more or less to a chiefdom level society with three categories of political powers : *Kiḷār* (village headman), *Vēḷir* (hill chiefs) and *Vēntar* (low land chiefs). An *ūr-kiḷān* of the pristine type was a clan based headman with kinship ties with his people. *Vēḷir* were the hill chiefs who sometimes subjugated the neighbouring *ūr-kiḷār* for predatory exaction, but confined their domain to the respective hills and peoples with whom they had clan ties. The *Vēntar* were the biggest chiefs and held control over larger areas through the subordination of the *Kiḷār* who fought for and shared the booty with them. They were the three lineages : Cēra, Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya with their domains in the *kuṟiñci* dominated zones from the western ghats to the Arabian sea, the Kaveri basin and *mullai-pālai* dominated south central zones including the sea coast respectively. But there was no notion of a precise boundary of each one's domain nor the practice of periodic exaction in fixed tithes or rent. Similarly there is no evidence to show that the allegiance of lesser chiefs in the border zone was perpetual in the case of any of the *Vēntar*. Absence of territoriality is implicit here and it makes one suspicious of the assumption about the existence of a state during the early historic period (Gurukkal 1989b). The nature of political power as reflected in the anthologies has been characterized in an entirely different manner also which is not far different from the conventional one, equating the chieftain to king and emperor (Kennedy 1976).

Some efforts have been made to identify the prime movers of the social formation, that subsequently brought about structural transformation (Gurukkal 1989b). Though not in terms of prime movers, all major developments in the early historic Tamil society have been viewed as consequences of

the dialectics of socio-economic change (Seneviratne 1989). The dialectics of socio-economic change refers to the totality of the dynamics of interaction among peoples. The formation of macro-eco-zones and the development of chiefdoms in such zones can be attributed to the economic interaction among the social groups of different micro-eco-zones. It has been argued that the process of socio-economic interaction between the relatively backward hill tracts and the developed alluvial plains generated enormous forces of change that had far-reaching consequences (Seneviratne 1989). The argument is that the backward zones remained backward owing to the contradictions immanent in their economic infrastructure, but interactions with developed zones generated the forces of their transformation. It is this process of interaction which has been characterized as dialectical. The mode of human adaptation in each micro-eco-zone had its own limitations in terms of technology and productivity. There were environmental as well as social contradictions in the sense that certain terrains were uncongenial and the means of livelihood thereof, inadequate. Sometimes the mode of human adaptation itself was contradictory. The variety of forms of subsistence and the modes of social appropriation proved contradictory within themselves as well as against one another. Certain zones had more of these contradictions and remained relatively more backward. It has been suggested that the forces of their development were generated through their interaction with developed zones. In addition there were forces released by the external dynamic, particularly long distance trade. All such factors would only account for the formation of what we identify as the early historic Tamil society and the implicit premise therefore is a view of gradual development without any breakthrough. The alternative argument is based on the characterization of diverse forms of production and the complex redistributive system (Gurukkal 1989a). Of the different forms of production, plough agriculture was the superior one in terms of technology and productivity, but it was yet to secure its conditions of domination. The superior forms of production need not always be the dominant form. It requires certain conditions for it to dominate over the co-existing forms of production. The domination ensures the

conditions of expansion and development for the dominant form. Here plough agriculture was still in the process of securing domination over animal husbandry and primitive farming. This was the basic contradiction within the social formation. Moreover, the complex redistributive system was incapable of improving its low labour productivity and facilitating economic reproduction. The limitations of kinship-based production in terms of surplus, the low level of economy and the destructive effects of predatory exaction were other handicaps of the system. A quest for the identification of prime movers has to centre itself around these contradictions and the alternative evolving out of them. The *brāhmaṇa* households using non-kin labour have been viewed as the nuclei of the evolving alternative (Gurukkal 1989a).

The *brāhmaṇa* households with their dependence on non-kin labour represented a new system of relations in production as distinct from the prevailing one based on kinship. The novelty of the system was that it involved the relationship between two different classes: the *brāhmaṇa* land holders and non-*brāhmaṇa* labourers. However, it was established as a simple hierarchy with no intermediaries on land, a class totally unknown to the anthologies. There is no direct evidence for precisely assessing the strength of the *brāhmaṇa* households during the period, which was obviously not big enough to characterize the society, as implied by the dominant features of the economy. But the influence of brāhmaṇical culture on the anthologies is remarkably strong (Narayanan 1975b), although the reverse has also been argued (Hart 1975, 1978) where it is maintained that the influence of Sanskrit on ancient Tamil was quite marginal and the archaic stratum of the anthologies represents an essentially non-Sanskritic culture.

Disintegration of kinship as the basis of production has been viewed as a perceptible manifestation of change in the prevailing system (Gurukkal 1989a). Apart from what is explicit in the case of developing *brāhmaṇa* households where formation of relations transcending kinship is inevitable, there could be certain other contexts also that facilitated the disintegration process. Predatory marches and migrations could have caused it to an extent, though we do not know about it straight from the sources. The anthologies do refer to

the context of warrior leaders getting *ūr* (primary settlement) as reward for helping the bigger chiefs in their plunder campaigns. Developing on such references, it has been argued that several warrior settlements were coming up through the process during the period (Narayanan 1982). The warrior settlements have been visualized as proto-feudal villages with localized services and obligations presupposing organization of local clansmen for production. It is important that the warrior leaders receiving *ūr* in lieu of their obligatory services *(viṭutoḷil)* to ruling chiefs, were often alien to the people of such *ūr*. The founding of settlements by warrior leaders in areas often beyond their original *ūr* would mean formation of relations transcending kinship. But it is unlikely that the warrior leaders were given the right over the land of the *ūr*. What had been granted to them could be the right to some kind of exaction from the concerned *ūr*.

We do not have any direct evidence for a total crisis, but there are indications of a major change during the closing decades of the third century A.D. in the form of the disappearance of certain institutions and economic activities. The eclipse of the *Vēntar* and *Vēlir* categories of chiefs, their bards and their plunder-based redistribution is one very conspicuous change. A decline in the post-Roman layer of the archaeological sites corresponds to this period (Sharma 1987). The well-known Indo-Roman trading centres like Arikamedu, Nattamedu, Karaikkadu and Vasavasamudram seem to have been deserted at the close of the second century A.D. However, the sites with Buddhist association show signs of continued occupation until the fifth century. The relics of a Buddhist shrine and a few *stūpas* at Kanchipuram and the Buddhist monastery at Kaveripattinam, belonging to the fourth-fifth centuries A.D. are examples. Certain sites like Uraiyur, Tirukkampuliyur and Atiyamankottai also have yielded evidence of structures in brick in the third-fourth centuries A.D. Tirukkampuliyur and Atiyamankottai indicate signs of continued occupation and development without the usual break at the immediate post-Roman levels. But to draw any reasonable inference, the archaeological excavations are too limited and incomplete. Moreover, the link between the sites and the hinterlands being elusive, there is little chance for direct

archaeological indications for or against a social crisis.

The tradition about the evils of the *Kaḷabhra* inroads has been interpreted as pointing to some kind of a social crisis leading to the disappearance of the characteristic institutions of the time. *Kaḷabhras* were a predatory people belonging to the uplands of Karnataka, who were believed to have entered the Tamil region and caused the eclipse of the Cēra, Coḷa and Pāṇḍya chiefs. *Vinayaviniccaya,* a Buddhist work in Pāli, probably composed at the monastery of Kaveripattinam, mentions a certain Achuta Vikanta of *Kaḷabhra-kula* as the patron ruler of the period. It appears that the predatory marches continuing from earlier times culminated in the *Kaḷabhra* inroads and brought about a total crisis, the memory of which survived to later times as evidenced by references in a few copper plates of the Pallava and Pāṇḍya kings. The *brāhmaṇas* who seem to be the worst affected, remembered the crisis of the days as the evils of the Kali age. This has encouraged thoughts about the relevance of the interpretation of *Kali yuga* in the context of a social crisis (Yadava 1978-79, Sharma 1982) to the situation in Tamil society. However, the *Kaḷabhra* episode can hardly be so fundamental as to provide explanation for changes of a substantial nature. The prime movers of social change were the contradictions within the system, which were possibly accentuated by the inroads of the *Kaḷabhras.*

A class of literature called the *Kīḷkaṇakku* belonging to the fourth-fifth centuries A.D. has been found emphasizing the significance of peace, obedience, loyalty and morality in the society. This presupposes the existence of a situation which called for such aspects of social morality or conduct. These didactic texts have been associated with the period of the *Kaḷabhra* invasion and the aftermath (Arunachalam 1979).

Whatever be the nature of the crisis that followed the *Kaḷabhra* inroads, the end of the period of chaos was marked by the steady growth of wet land agriculture which meant the growth of a new system of social relations. The process was characterized by the proliferation of *brahmadēya* villages. It has been argued that the new system evolved out of its microcosm present in the *brāhmaṇa* households of the time of the heroic poems. A *brahmadēya* is never referred to in the actual text of

the poems, but their colophons which are later, do refer to it.
The recent discovery of a rock inscription at Pulankurichchi
near Ponnamaravati (Manamadurai), probably of late fourth
century or early fifty century A.D. has confirmed the existence
of *brahmadēya* villages during the period (Nagaswamy 1981).
Just as the colophons, the inscription also uses the term
pirammatāya, perhaps suggesting the chronological proximity of
the two. The *brahmadēya* village represented by the
Pulankurichchi inscription is a fully evolved agrarian unit with
structured land relations and service bound settlers. Obviously
it presupposes a long development from the days of the heroic
poems, the process of which is virtually unknown to us. Some
of the early copper plates while referring to the previous
history of the villages donated mention that they were
originally *ēkabhōga brahmadēyas* and lost in the wake of the
Kaḷabhra raids. Subsequently, when the lost villages were
restored to the heir of the original donee, they were converted
into corporate *brahmadēyas*. This would suggest that a crucial
phase in the developmental process was that of the transfor-
mation of individual *brāhmaṇa* households into corporate
settlements. The Pallava and Pāṇḍya kings had a leading role
in the creation of such corporate *brahmadēyas* whose prolifera-
tion in their turn led to the establishment of a new kingship
of *cakravartin* status.

The formation of corporate agrarian settlements has been
understood as a process of the development of close coopera-
tion between the peasant cultivators and *brāhmaṇas*, virtually
amounting to that of an alliance (Stein 1980). This view has
been challenged emphasizing the actual processes of the
formation of institutions, groups and relations in the field of
production (Jha 1984). The institutional, organizational and
ideational means required for mobilizing people so as to
satisfy the needs of the labour process in wet land agriculture
were ready with the *brāhmaṇa* landholders. What has been
pointed out as crucial in the process of the formation of the
new agrarian society was, therefore, the deployment of the
institutional and organizational apparatuses by the *brāhmaṇas*
for managing agricultural people by means of a variety of
social instruments rather than the result of a formal alliance.
The corporate body, caste and *bhakti* were the major means

that the *brāhmaṇas* devised for the integration of the agrarian society. It appears that such a society of systematized relations and functions reinforced by the institution of caste and the cult of *bhakti* began to take shape with the close of the fifth century A.D. *Tolkāppiam-porul*, the well known grammatical treatise, probably of the early sixth century represents the efflorescence of a society with these features. Here the genesis of a new social formation structured by the dominance of relations peculiar to wet land agriculture becomes complete, anticipating further institutional manifestations during the ensuing period.

Bibliography

Arunachalam M. 1979. "The Kalabhras in the Pandya Country and Their Impact on the Life and Letters There." *Journal of the Madras University* LI. 1, (Madras University Publication).

Bowra C. M. 1966. *Heroic Poetry* (London : Cambridge University Press).

Chadwick H. M. and N. K. Chadwick 1940. *The Growth of Literature,* 3 vols. (London : Cambridge University Press).

Champakalakshmi R. 1975-6. "Archaeology and Tamil Literary Tradition." *Purātattva* VIII. (New Delhi : Archaeological Survey of India Publication).

—— 1982. "Urban Processes in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu." *Occasional Paper Series* 3, (Urban History Association of India Publication).

—— 1986. "Urbanisation in South India : The Role of Ideology and Polity." Presidential Address, Section I, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress (PIHC) (Delhi : Indian History Congress Publication).

Claessen H. J. M. and P. Skalnik (eds.) 1978. *The Early State,* (The Hague : Mouton).

—— and Vande Velde (eds.) 1987. *Early State Dynamics* (Leiden : E. J. Brill).

Dubiansky A. M. 1980. "An Analysis of the Mullai-Palai Fragment of Ancient Tamil Poetry." *Journal of Tamil Studies* 17, Madras.

Friedman J. and M. J. Rowlands (eds.) 1977. *The Evolution of Social Systems,* (London : Duckworth).

Godelier M. 1977. *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press).

Gregory C. A. 1983. *Gifts and Commodities* (London : Academic Press).

Gurukkal R. 1981. "Aspects of Early Iron Age Economy : Problems of Agrarian Expansion in Tamilakam." PIHC. Reproduced in B. D. Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *Ancient Indian Economic History* (Delhi : Indian History Congress Publication).

—— 1989a. "Forms of Production and Forces of Change in

Ancient Tamil Society." *Studies in History* 5, 2, New Delhi.

———— 1989b. "Social Formation and Political Processes in Early Tamilakam." In R. Champakalakshmi (ed.), *The State in Pre-Colonial South India* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press). (forthcoming)

Hart G. L. 1974. "Some Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Tamil Literature." In Trautman (ed.), *Kinship and History in South Asia*, (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan).

———— 1975. *The Poems of Ancient Tamil : Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*, (Berkeley : University of California Press).

———— 1978. "Ancient Tamil Literature : Its Scholarly Past and Future." In B. Stein (ed.) *Essays On South India* (New Delhi : Vikas Publication).

Jha D. N. 1985. "Validity of the Brahman Peasant Alliance and the Segmentary State in Early Medieval South India." In Karashima (ed.), *Indus Valley to Makong Delta* (Madras : New Era Publication).

Kailasapathy K. 1968. *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (London : Oxford University Press).

Kennedy R. S. 1976. "King in Early South India as Chieftain and Emperor." *Indian Historical Review* III, 1, New Delhi.

Krader L. 1968. *Formation of the State* (Englewood Cliffs : Prentice Hall).

Lamberg-Karlovsky C. C. and J. Sabloff (eds.) 1975. *Ancient Civilisation and Trade*, (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico).

Leshnik L. S. 1974. *South Indian 'Megalithic' Burials : The Pandukal Complex* (Wiesbaden : Franz Steiner Verlag).

Lévi-Strauss C. 1969. *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (London : Eyre and Spottiswood).

Maloney C. 1969. "The Paratavar : 2000 Years of Culture Dynamics of a Tamil Caste." *Man in India* 48, no. 3.

———— 1970. "The Beginnings of the Civilization in South India." *Journal of Asian Studies* XXIX, 3.

———— 1976. "Archaeology in South India : Accomplishments and Prospects." In B. Stein (ed.), *Essays on South India* (New Delhi : Vikas Publication).

Marr J. A. 1987. *The Eight Anthologies : A Study in Early Tamil*

(Madras : Institute of Asian Studies Publication).

Meillassoux C. (ed.) 1971. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London : Oxford University Press).

—— 1973. "The Social Organisation of the Peasantry : Economic Basis of Kinship." *Journal of Peasant Studies* I, 1

Nagaswamy R. 1981. "An Outstanding Epigraphical Discovery in Tamil Nadu." An Archaeological Survey of Madras Publication. Also published in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference : Seminar on Tamil Studies* (Madurai : ICSTS Publication).

Nair B. 1977. *The Problem of Dravidian Origins : A Linguistic, Archaeological and Anthropological Approach* (Madras : Madras University Publication).

Narasimaiah B. 1980. *Neolithic and Megalithic Cultures in Tamil Nadu* (New Delhi : Sundeep Prakashan).

Narayanan M. G. S. 1975a. "The Maurayan Problem in Sangam Works in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Indian History* LIII, II.

—— 1975b. "Vedic, Puranic, Sastraic Elements in Tamil Sangam Society and Culture." PIHC (Delhi : Indian History Congress Publication).

—— 1982. "The Warrior Settlements of the Sangam Age." PIHC (Delhi : Indian History Congress Publication).

Pillai K. K. 1979. *The Social History of the Tamils* (Madras : Madras University Publication).

Propp V. 1979. *Morphology of the Folktale* (Berkeley : California University Press).

Rao, B. K. Gururaja 1972. *Megalithic Culture in South India* (Mysore : Prasaranga Publication).

Ratnagar S. F. 1981. *Encounters : The Westerly Trade of Harappa Civilisation* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Ritti S. H. (ed) 1978. *A Decade of Archaeological Studies in South India*, Dharwar.

Seneviratne S. 1989. "Pre-State Societies to State Societies : Transformations in the Political Ecology of South India With Special Reference to Tamil Nadu." In R. Champakalakshmi, *The State in Pre-colonial South India*, Oxford University Press (forthcoming).

Service E. R. 1975. *Origins of the State and Civilization : The*

Process of Cultural Evolution (New York: Norton).

Sharma R. S. 1982. "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis." In B. N. Mukherjee (ed.), *History and Thought: Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham.*

—— 1983. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (New Delhi: MacMillan).

—— 1987. *Urban Decay in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).

Singaravelu S. 1966. *The Social Life of the Tamils: The Classical Period,* Kuala Lumpur.

Sivathamby K. 1974. "Early South Indian Society and Economy: The Tinai Concept." *Social Scientist* 29.

Stein B. 1980. *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Subrahmanian N. 1966. *Sangam Polity* (Delhi: Asia Publishing House).

Sundara A. 1975. *Early Chamber Tombs of South India* (Delhi: University Publishers).

Terray E. 1972. *Marxism and Primitive Societies* (London: Oxford University Press).

Thapar R. 1973. *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (London: Oxford University Press).

—— 1978. *Ancient Indian Social History* (New Delhi: Orient Longman).

—— 1984. *From Lineage to State* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

—— 1988. *The Mauryas Revisited* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Company).

Trautman T. R. (ed.) 1974. *Kinship and History in South Asia,* University of Michigan.

—— 1981. *Dravidian Kinship,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Yadava B. N. S. 1978-79. "The Account of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages." *Indian Historical Review,* V. 1 & 2.

Zvelebil K. 1973a. *The Smile of Murugan* (Leiden: E. J. Brill).

—— 1973b. "The Earliest Account of the Tamil Academies." *Indo-Iranian Journal* XV, 2.

VII

State and Economy:
South India, Circa A.D. 400-1300

R. CHAMPAKALAKSHMI

South India is broadly defined in historical writings as covering the present day linguistic states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where the four major languages of the Dravidian family are spoken. It is also understood as an area over which certain uniform cultural patterns evolved from the early historic times, that is, from the beginning of the Christian era. The major geographical divisions of south India, the Deccan plateau, the plains of the Andhra and Tamil regions and the coastal strip from Maharashtra down to Kerala separated by the long stretch of the Western Ghats—have been recognized as the three major regional constituents shaping historical configurations and forming the dynastic heartland of the dominant ruling families of the four regions in the early medieval period, A.D. 400-1300.

Pioneering works on the history of south India recognized the importance of geography but have largely concentrated on political narratives, dynastic changes and administrative institutions, with some marginal attention to the social and economic aspects in their concluding chapters. Geography, however, remained isolated in the introductory chapters, pointing to a conspicuous lack of an integrated approach. Larger kingdoms or polities have invariably been characterized as empires (Altekar 1967, Yazdani 1960) and smaller polities as minor dynasties with a feudatory status, which have now been more correctly perceived in studies of political processes in early medieval India (Chattopadhyaya 1983) as larger and smaller lineage polities, the larger ones having no pretensions

to imperial status.

There has been little or no change in the approaches to the history of the Deccan and Andhra regions of early medieval India (Derrett 1957, Ramesh 1984, Gopal 1982, Krishna Murari 1977), despite the fact that some serious efforts have been made to study various aspects of economy (Sundaram 1968, Kuppuswamy 1975) and polity (Dikshit 1964, Basavaraja 1983). They continue to be dominated by the narrative method and descriptive accounts of well known institutions of the times with little regard for developmental process or changes in agrarian organization (Leela Shanthakumari 1986), evolution of urban centres and their relationship to political structures (Kuppuswamy 1975).

On the other hand, a noteworthy shift has occurred in studies on Kerala, which began to make serious enquiries into the nature of the agrarian organization, role of *brāhmaṇa* settlements and temples in the emergence of the distinctive socio-political structure of Kerala, especially of the early medieval period under the Kulasekharas of Makotai, emphasizing the need to use new and more viable conceptual tools of analysis (Narayanan 1972, 1977, Veluthat 1978, Gurukkal 1980). More particularly, in comparison with these regions, the historiography of Tamil Nadu has, since sixties, taken more significant strides. This essay is an attempt to show that the new perspectives emerging from the methodologically and analytically advanced studies of Tamil Nadu may well guide the way to more perceptive studies on the other regions of south India in future.

On the study of the state and economy in south India from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries A.D. three sets of perspectives may be discerned in south Indian historiography. The differences in these perspectives are best illustrated in the studies of the Tamil macro-region with its rich epigraphic sources, which are relatively more detailed and more complete in their material content than those from the other parts of peninsular India. The discussion is hence restricted in this essay to the history of the Tamil region from the fifth to thirteenth centuries and more specifically to the period from seventh to thirteenth centuries, which represents the most well documented period of its history—the period of the dominance

of the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas of the sixth-ninth centuries and of the Coḷas of the ninth-thirteenth centuries A.D. The period 400-600 A.D. is devoid of any useful and precisely dated contemporary records[1] and hence depends, for its illumination, on the hindsight provided by later sources, only a restrospective view being possible.

I

In conventional historiography, given its bias towards a narrative of political history, the nature of the state and economy was often discussed as a part of political or dynastic history. These older methods invariably tended to compartmentalize state and economy as separate, isolated aspects with little or no attempt to discuss change or transformation in society and economy and its linkages with political processes (Gopalan 1928, Minakshi 1977, Nilakanta Sastri 1975). Temples and their histories were studied but not as a part of the larger processes of their institutional development and role in the evolution of society and polity. Failure to grasp these linkages is also illustrated in their treatment of polity from the Sangam age (300 B.C.-A.D. 300) to the Vijayanagar period (fourteenth-seventeenth centuries) as undifferentiated (Mahalingam 1967). The merit of the conventional approach, however, lies in the fact that it has provided a sound chronological framework of political history and information base.

The new approaches have taken off from this base and have attempted to provide new insights through fresh interpretations and new methods of analysis of the same data. As a result, visions of the past have significantly changed (Stein 1980). Better perspectives in understanding the evolution of regional polities and cultures have emerged. Against such regional perspectives the importance of studying the processes of state formation and state structures has been stressed (Kulke 1982, Chattopadhyaya 1983).

The new perspectives are discussed here under three

1 The only exceptions are the earliest *brahmadeya* inscription from Pulankurichchi (Ramanathapuram district) and some post-Sangam literary works generally assigned to to the fifth-sixth centuries A.D. The dates are however debatable.

chronological phases, which are : (1) the post-Sangam transition to a new socio-economic formation (fourth-sixth centuries), (2) the period of the Pallava-Pāṇḍya monarchies and (3) the Cōḻa period.

In the post-Sangam phase of transition, the Tamil region was in a state of flux following the traditional Tamil polities—the *Cēra*, *Cōla* and *Pāṇḍya*—of the early historic or Sangam period. The Sangam period was characterized by a vigorous material culture and a multiplicity of social, economic and cultural forms, as reflected in the distinctive concept of *tiṇai* or eco-types, dominated by the three tribal chiefdoms in the river valleys (Champakalakshmi 1986b). The transition towards a new socio-economic structure established the domination of peasant agriculture even before the rise of the Pallava-Pāṇḍya monarchies. Interestingly, in the Deccan and Andhra regions the same period is marked by the emergence of small lineage polities supported by a brāhmaṇical ideology and institutional forms such as the *brahmadeya* (landgrants to *brāhmaṇas*) and the temple of the Puranic religion, an environment in which the Pallavas started their political career.

The post-Sangam period was characterized in conventional history as a "dark age" and as an "inter-regnum" caused by the subversion of the traditional Tamil society and polity by a tribe called the *Kaḷabhras* who were evil kings (*Kali araśar*), the notion of the "dark age", being a recurring theme in the traditional approach, which viewed the earlier and subsequent periods as glorious epochs in Tamil history (Nilakanta Sastri 1958). It was also assumed that the "dark age" ended with the revival of brāhmaṇical socio-religious institutions of *varṇa*, Vedic and Puranic worship, etc., implying that these forms had been well established even in the Sangam age. The new approaches have viewed this period as one of hostility between the hill and forest people (hunters, etc.) and people of the plains (peasants) belonging to different eco-zones (Stein 1980). The ecological approach to the study of the early historic and early medieval periods has shown that the nature of economic organization was uneven in the early period (Sivathamby 1974), with evidence of peasant organization in the river valleys (*marutam* - plains). The expansion and domination of peasant agriculture by the seventh century A.D.

within *marutam* and into other eco-zones marked the genesis of a new agrarian organization of peasant societies (Stein 1980).

The period of transition is also viewed as one of crisis caused by the decline of maritime trade, which was a major resource potential for the early tribal polities, and the decay of urban centres fostered by them. Hence, this period is marked by a lack of clear political and economic configurations, a possible clash of interests among lesser chiefs, who were aspirants to economic influence and political authority and competition among various religious sects (brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Jain) seeking patronage and avenues of support other than trade, possibly land (Champakalakshmi 1986b).

Political and economic configurations come back into sharp focus from the sixth century A.D., when a new state system emerged with the domination of the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas in the northern and southern regions of Tamil Nadu (Kāñcīpuram and Madurai). Studies on polity and economy have necessarily to begin from the ascendancy of these two ruling families. Several pioneering studies on the history of this period exist but they have concentrated on political history and incidentally on polity, which has been characterized as centralized and bureaucratic (Minakshi 1977, Mahalingam 1967). They have focused much less on economic history except to study the institutional aspects of the landgrants such as the *brahmadeya* and the temple. In the new approaches these institutions have been more correctly understood as instruments of agrarian expansion and integration, especially when viewed against their geographical and ecological contexts (Stein 1980, Champakalakshmi 1986b). Contrary to the older perspectives, which treated this period as one of disjunction introducing an entirely new set of political and economic structures, the recent approaches have discussed it more as a period of continuous agrarian expansion, of gradual change (Stein 1980) and of the integration of pre-existing agrarian or peasant regions through new institutional forms (Champakalakshmi 1988, 1989c).

The conventional view of Pallava polity is one in which brāhmaṇical kingdoms are believed to have been founded on the model of the north Indian kingdoms of the post-Gupta period imbibing northern Sanskritic elements; the Pallavas,

being aliens to the Tamil region, are hailed as innovators, who introduced northern elements in the Tamil region and the Pāṇḍyas are believed to have adopted them in the southern region (Minakshi 1977, Nilakanta Sastri 1929). The recent historiography, however, suggests the evolution of a type of polity in which the northern elements, particularly its regal forms had to be adapted to different conditions, that is, to the specificity of the agrarian context with its entrenched peasant regions (Stein 1980). The Pallavas succeeded in establishing such a polity by the ninth century A.D. There is, however, no uniformity in the more recent assessment of this period, for according to one view both peasant dominance and brāhmaṇical socio-cultural forms were already well advanced and Pallava military power is believed to have been incapable of transforming social and cultural institutions (Stein 1980, 1985). This is, however, not borne out by the art and architectural output of the Pallava period. As illustrated by their bilingual copper plate records (in Sanskrit and Tamil) and by their Puranic temples, the Pallavas undoubtedly initiated a process of restructuring economy and society through the institution of landgrant to *brāhmaṇas* (*brahmadeya*) and temples. Of great significance, therfore, is the evolution of the typical *drāviḍa* style of architecture and the use of permanent materials like stone in the Pallava rock-cut and structural temples which established the dominance of the Purāṇic religions of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. This was in keeping with their Purāṇic cosmological world view, the ideology which legitimized their power (Champakalakshmi 1986b, 1989b).

Western imperialist notions of the state as empire and a more direct concern with administrative history dominated the earlier scholarly works on Pallava polity, with the general assumption of the prevalence of all the features of a modern state and the attempt to find evidence of it in the inscriptional terms interpreted arbitrarily to suit the notions of a glorious state. Implicit in their view of the state was also a single model of statecraft inspired by *dharma* and based on the *Dharmaśāstra* (Minakshi 1977, Govindasamy 1965). The new perspectives have considerably modified the dhārmic view of Pallava monarchy (Dirks 1976). The all-powerful imperial

character has been successfully demystified by the attempts to study the underlying material or economic structure, that is, the agrarian order and its increasing complexity in the centuries of Cōḷa rule, both of which were not serious concerns in the earlier works.

The new approaches have further delineated the process of the development of this agrarian order through a study of the role of the *brahmadeya* and the temple in integrating and restructuring society and economy, achieving a fairly high level of systemic integration by the ninth century A.D. and the crucial and increasing role of the temple from the ninth to twelfth centuries A.D. leading to a higher level of integration (Champakalakshmi 1986b). The irrigation works initiated by the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas show a major advance in technology through the use of stone sluices (Gunawardana 1984, Gurukkal 1986). Together with the managerial inputs for their maintenance and for the improvement of agricultural operations provided by the landowning *brāhmaṇas* (*sabhā*) and the *vēḷāḷas* (*ūr*—non-*brāhmaṇa* agriculturists), they contributed to the expansion of agriculture and intensification of cultivation and hence turned subsistence-based isolated agricultural tracts into surplus-oriented agrarian units (Gurukkal 1984). A historical geography approach and contextual analysis of inscriptional data have furthered our understanding of this process and of the significance of the *nāḍu*'s evolution as a peasant micro-region, its social and economic organization and its integration through institutional means into a new agrarian order (Subbarayalu 1973, Stein 1980 and Champakalakshmi 1986b and 1989c).

The denial of the long prevailing notion that the early medieval states were centralized bureaucratic polities in fact stems from the study of the *nāḍu* organization (Subbarayalu 1973). Among the new perspectives, the one which continues to hold a persuasive influence is that which has demonstrated that the *nāḍu* organization, representing local economic control, appropriation and allocation of resources, is incompatible with the conception of a centralized state. As an alternative, the theory of the segmentary state has been put forward both for the Pallava and Cōḷa periods, according to which, the *nāḍu* as the peasant region was the autonomous segment controlled by

the *nāṭṭār* and the centre, that is, the king, exercised only a nominal 'ritual' sovereignty. Hence the characterization of the early medieval south Indian state and society as a peasant state and society (Stein 1980). The contradiction involved in the application of the theory of the centralized state, that is, the characterization of the Cōla government as a Byzantine type of monarchy, having at the same time democratically organized local assemblies (*sabhā* and *ūr*) or village 'republics' has thus been exposed.

The key elements in the segmentary state of south India as defined by Stein and other American scholars are : (1) *nāḍu*, which, in their analysis, is an autonomous social, economic and political locality, that is, periphery. (2) The absence of an organized central system of taxation, war-loot being the major source of the state's income. (3) Absence of a strong central-ized army and the presence of caste and guild armies. (4) A weakly organized centre exercising ritual sovereignty.

The segments, in this perspective, were integrated by royal patronage to *brāhmaṇas* and temples, on the one hand, and on the other by ceremonial and ritual sovereignty. Political sovereignty was exercised by the Cōlas only in the core region, that is, Cōla *nāḍu;* and control became progressively weaker over segments in proportion to their distance from the core zone, fading away into ritual sovereignty.

The model of the segmentary state is derived from the studies of African lineage societies (Southall 1956). The applicability of such anthropological models from Africa to explain the nature of the south Indian state and the total rejection of the concept of feudalism for medieval India by the protagonists of the segmentary state have evoked a continuing debate. The segmentary concept is used for south India at a high level of abstraction which tends to limit the precision with which it can explain the specific features of a state. Critiques of the segmentary theory question its validity on various grounds, particularly on account of the lack of empirical controls (Champakalakshmi 1981, Subbarayalu 1982). Agrarian societies are peasant societies with varying degrees of peasant autonomy in the production processes. However, in the south Indian case this theory needs to be backed up by a more rigorous analysis of the agrarian order, which is a

highly complex one. Hardcore questions like the nature of land rights and relations, taxation and surplus appropriation and its impact on the peasantry have not been satisfactorily dealt with. They are just beginning to be examined in the recent studies based on statistical analysis of inscriptional evidence. The existence of a peasant society with such a degree of autonomy as assigned to the *nāḍu* vis-a-vis the state and the changeless character of the *nāḍu* over 400 years of Cōḷa rule is hard to sustain in the light of studies on the *nāḍu*, its composition and relations with other institutions like the *brahmadeya* and *nagaram* or marketing centre (Subbarayalu 1973, 1982, 1989, Hall 1980, Champakalakshmi 1986b). The difficulties in the perspectives of the segmentary theory are caused by the same complexity in the sources which led the pioneering scholarly exercise to overlook the contradictions in their assessment of the south Indian state.

The concept of feudalism, which has gained considerable following since the fifties, as representing a structural change in the Indian social and economic order in the post-Gupta period, has not been rigorously applied to the south Indian evidence. The tacit acceptance of the existence of feudal vassals and chiefs in conventional histories of south India is hardly influenced by the idea of any structural change in the socio-economic order. The concept is, however, posed as an alternative analytical tool to the segmentary model in the critiques of the latter. What is questioned in the segmentary state concept are the assumptions of the peasants' mastery over the cultivation process and political management, absence of class conflicts and social tensions and existence of a free peasantry in the absence of an exploiting class (Jha 1984, Narayanan 1985).

The recurrence of the centralization and decentralization process in a cyclical pattern and the emphasis either on the centre or on the periphery of the state structure in most studies of the medieval Indian state have led to an imperfect understanding of the intermediate zone, which is either completely ignored or glossed over. The centre-periphery dichotomy of the segmentary model would indicate too rigid a standpoint whereas the feudalism model may still be expected to provide useful insights for the study of this area.

The significance of the intermediate zone as a determinant in the making, unmaking or remaking of state structures and its relevance to the understanding of the character of the state are being revealed in the more recent perspectives provided by approaches based on detailed statistical analysis and historical geography (Karashima 1984, Subbarayalu 1973, 1982, 1989, Champakalakshmi 1986a, 1988, 1989a). The need for cross-cultural comparisons of south India with Southeast Asia is emphazised and the possibility of evolving adequate Asianist models to replace European and Africanist models as more relevant for studying a variety of Asian social formations is also pointed out (Subrahmanyam 1986).

The study of the state and the economy is now at a juncture wherein theories and models need to be tested against empirically unassailable studies on the various aspects of the medieval south Indian state and society. Studies of a micro-level nature based on refined statistical methods and historical geography have partially met this need. Neither the segmentary state nor feudalism have been found adequate in explaining the south Indian state and society over the long period of Pallava-Cōla rule, that is, over 600 years. Changes in society and economy from what may be seen as communal organization in the pre-Cōla period to a more stratified, differentiated society, changing patterns of land rights and greater centralization of state power have been recognized. Different configurations and sub-systems of control have also been postulated. The evolution of the Tamil macro-region and regional culture coinciding with the evolution of the mature Cōla state adds another dimension to the study of medieval state societies namely, the study of culture regions. For, in the early medieval context, that is, the post-Gupta period, the evolution of distinctive culture regions coincided with the formation of regional states as in the case of Orissa under the Eastern Gangas (Eschmann et al. 1978) and Tamil Nadu under the Cōlas.

II

Any discussion of the agrarian order in early medieval south India has to begin with the *nāḍu*, which evolved out of

peasant settlements. The *nāḍu* was the basic agrarian unit, an economic as well as ethnic region or an eco-type based on kinship ties, that is, a 'peasant micro-region.'[2] As the most stable feature of agrarian organization from pre-Cōḷa times, the nuclei of some *nāḍu-s* can be dated back to the Sangam or the early historic period. By describing it as a territorial assembly, conventional writings have overlooked its politico-economic significance. On the other hand, the segmentary state theory has been built up entirely on the basis of the assumption that the *nāḍu* was the basic segment, unit of society, production and politics with a highly autonomous, insular and unchanging character (Stein 1980). It has hence failed to take note of the changing internal structure of the *nāḍu*, the structure of land rights and tenures as well as the erosion of its kinship based organization (Subbarayalu 1982, Karashima 1984). The complexion and composition of the *nāḍu* and its *nāṭṭār* assembly underwent changes over time due to its interaction with institutions such as the *brahmadeya*, temple and *nagaram* (Hall 1980, 1981, Champakalakshmi 1986b, 1989c).

The evolutionary character of the *nāḍu*, its expansion and increase from the seventh to thirteenth centuries in all the sub-regions of the Tamil macro-region have been indicated through studies of settlement patterns. The *nāḍu* also shows an increase of settlements within it during this period. By the seventh century A.D., when *nāḍu* appears in inscriptional records, the dominance of agriculture over other economic activities had been established. Extension of agricultural activities was facilitated in the river valleys through flood control strategies (mud embankments and canals) as in the Kaveri delta, and through reservoirs in drier areas, resulting in the spread of agrarian settlements, at times rapidly, up the riverine valleys and laterally into other eco-zones, largely at the expense of tribal peoples subsisting on hunting and shifting cultivation. This pattern was common to all the nuclear regions like the Palar-Cheyyar valley in the north (Pallava region) and the Vaigai-Tamraparni valleys in the south (Pāṇḍya region) indicating a phased opening of the plains, an important factor

---

2 The possibility of such peasant regions having evolved in other parts of India needs to be explored.

of agrarian periodisation in south India. Together with the *nāḍu*, the *brahmadeya* and the temple also marked such expansion. Organization and management of production were under the control of the *brāhmaṇas* and *vēḷāḷa* (non-*brāhmaṇa* agriculturists) landowners. The management of water resources was crucial, the capacity of irrigation works determining the range of expansion.

The chronological sequence of such expansion, the correspondence between increase in irrigation works and *nāḍus* between the seventh and eleventh centuries (Champakalakshmi 1988, 1989c) synchronizes to a remarkable degree with the integration of less developed, pre-existing settlements into the newly created *brahmadeya* and temple nucleated centres. The process of integration coincided with a restructuring of economy and society in all the sub-regions and brought about the evolution of the macro-region, with its distinctive socio-political culture.

Of the 550 *nāḍus* which had come into existence by the thirteenth century in the four sub-regions, a majority had evolved by the eleventh century A.D., the density being the greatest in Cōḷamaṇḍalam, that is, the Kaveri valley. Although *nāḍu* literally means cultivated area, it was used more as a generic term for any settled area, whether of highly dense or dispersed agricultural settlements or areas with other major resources like salt or forest products where agriculture was a subsidiary activity, that is, tribal areas, with varied internal structure, both in occupation and organization (Subbarayalu 1973, Champakalakshmi 1989a).

The theory of the peasant state and society, based on the *nāḍu*'s autonomy, subsumes the idea of a free peasantry holding mastery over the means and processes of production, although within the social context of communal property relations at the production base (Stein 1980, 1985). Different perceptions have existed regarding land rights and landownership in medieval south India. The conventional view held that there was a prevalance of both communal and individual ownership, the latter on the basis of alienation by sale or gift. Such a view maintained that several types of rights co-existed such as tenancy on private estates and temple lands, tenures such as peasant proprietorship (*veḷḷān vagai*),

service tenures (*jīvita, bhoga,* etc.) and eleemosynary tenures (*brahmadeya, sālābhoga* and *devadāna*) and military fiefs, apart from state-owned lands and state claims to unassigned land. In this view the village and not the *nāḍu* is assumed to be the primary unit of production (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Mahalingam 1967). This lack of clear perception can be traced to the complexity of evidence on land rights. The confusion persists in other more recent works for the same reason. Private rights in land are almost totally denied in the segmentary state concept, the peasant base of the agrarian order being recognized in the corporate organization of the *nāṭṭār*. In this perspective south India reveals a set of transformations within a single agrarian structure which endured for a millennium, that is, seventh to seventeenth centuries. It recognizes no change in technology and assigns no role to the state in the transformations involving patterns of surplus appropriation (Stein 1985).

The more recent perceptions of property and land rights are based on a study of the *kāṇi* rights referred to in Cōḷa inscriptions, which suggest that power over land and its produce was not communal, despite a variety of collective controls (Karashima 1984, Heitzman 1987). There were a number of determinable legal rights with a greater specification of individual rights. Stratification and individual ownership have been recognized even from the early period in *brahmadeya* villages and later even in the non-*brahmadeya* villages. *Kāṇi* rights, transferable by sale or donations, are hence interpreted as hereditary rights in land, rights of possession and of privileges in the village and regarded as a prototype of the *miras* of the British revenue records. Increase in land sales and gifts in non-*brahmadeya* villages and therefore an increase in private holdings are also believed to be attested in the twelfth century A.D. This is attributed to economic development, agricultural productivity and income from trade and distribution of wealth acquired in wars by the chiefs. Land grant to officials and military holdings were also a factor in the emergence of big landholders (Karashima 1984, Subbarayalu 1982, 1989).

The uncertainty regarding the use of the term private ownership may again be traced to the difficulties in interpret-

ing inscriptional terms. Yet, the existence of various categories of rights regarded as the core rights of private ownership—to posses, cultivate, mortgage, sell and bequeath—has been pointed out (Kumar 1985). Such rights were however determined and enjoyed within the norms accepted by the contemporary organizations such as the *brahmadeya* and *ūr* and the family. The idea of the 'agnatic kinsmen' (*pangāḷi*), co-sharers in local production, within the households is taken as indicative of proprietorship vesting in the families (Stein 1985).

Larger units like the *nāḍu* having been given due precedence in studies on agrarian organization, the theory of the vitality of the village communities (little republics) has lost its validity. The question now is whether the *nāḍu* with its *nāṭṭār* assembly enjoyed such a high degree of autonomy and relative stability as is assigned to it in the concept of the segmentary state. The autonomy of the *nāḍu* requires to be examined more closely and this can be effectively done only by assessing its role *vis-a'-vis* the *brahmadeya*, the *nagaram* and the temple.

The Brahmadeya

Land grants to *brāhmaṇas* are known from the early historic period. However, it is not until the fourth century A.D. in the Deccan and Andhra region and until the seventh century A.D. in the Tamil region that they assumed an institutional character due to their legitimating and integrating functions. Such grants were made either to a single *brāhmaṇa* or several *brāhmaṇas*, the number reaching a thousand or more in some Cōḷa records (Minakshi 1977, Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Mahalingam 1967). *Brahmadeyas* were created by ruling families in hitherto uncultivated land or among existing settlements by clubbing together two or more such settlements. Contextual evidence shows that they were harbingers of advanced farming methods—irrigation, management of resources and means of production. The reservoir systems (with stone sluices) in the Pallava-Pāṇḍya regions were initiated by the rulers and managed by local bodies like the *sabhā* and the *ūr*. *Brahmadeyas*, invariably located near major irrigation works, occur in all *nāḍus*, a minimum of one per *nāḍu* and in all the *kōṭṭams* of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. The *kōṭṭam* was a pastoral-cum-agricultural region in the Pallava territory, within which *nāḍus*

evolved. Here, the interconnection between the creation of *brahmadeya*, irrigation works and *nāḍu* expansion are better attested by inscriptional records and their geographical context. The conversion of *brahmadeyas* into *tan-kūṛus* (*taniyūrs*) or independent revenue units from the tenth century A.D. by the Cōḷas is of greater economic and administrative/political significance, for a *taniyūr* was separated from the *nāḍu* as an administrative unit. These developments were closely linked to a restructuring of the economy and indeed laid the economic foundation or resource base of Cōḷa power in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and a widening agricultural (and later commercial) hinterland for Kāñcīpuram, a politico-cultural centre under the Pallavas and Cōḷas (Champakalakshmi 1988).

The autonomy of the *brahmadeya* is indicated in several ways. It owed its existence and loyalty to the kings who created and patronized it and not to the *nāḍu*. Specific instructions to the *nāḍu* officials (*nāḍu kāppān* and *viyavan*)͘ not to enter the *brahmadeya* are on record (Minakshi 1977, Subbarayalu 1989). Creation of *brahmadeyas* also entailed reorganization of irrigation networks in the *nāḍu*, especially the canals of the *nāḍu*, and hence the royal records are·addressed to the *nāṭṭārs*, who were responsible for making the necessary provisions for the *brahmadeya*. This is not to be construed as *nāṭṭār* consent to such grants (Subbarayalu 1989).

There is no evidence of a 'dominant peasantry' (*nāṭṭār*) creating or founding *brahmadeyas* or of a voluntary and mutually beneficial *brāhmaṇa*-dominant *vēḷāḷa* alliance as implied in the theory of a peasant state. The integrative function of the *brahmadeya* is emphasized by proponents of the theory of "integrative polity" for the emergence of regional states (Kulke 1982, Chattopadhyaya 1983). The *brahmadeya* is here seen as an integrative instrument and as a pacemaker of royal authority to enlarge the sphere of political action and to rationalize royal power with a minimum use of force by the state (Hall 1981, Kulke 1982).

The *sabhā*, the *ūr* and the *nagaram*, which are described as 'caste-based' corporate bodies, functioned at various levels, sharing authority as community leaders (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Subbarayalu 1989). However, there is no evidence of the *ūrār* (*vēḷāḷas*) dominating community affairs. The *sabhā* at times

grew as a more prominent institution *vis-a-vis* the *ūr* and the growing maturity of the *sabhā* is exemplified by Uttaramērūr, a major *brahmadeya,* which became a *taniyūr* (Hall 1981, Champakalakshmi 1988). It was at royal initiative rather than that of the agricultural elite that such *brahmadeyas* were strategically placed to ensure the loyalty of the non-*brahmadeya* villages (Kulke 1982). Royal officials were present in the *sabhā* meetings at the time of major and politically important transactions (Nilakanta Sastri 1975). Royal authority would thus seem to be more extensive at the local level than is allowed by the 'segmentary state' theory (Hall 1981, Karashima 1984, Champakalashmi 1988).

In this context, the *nagaram* also provides evidence of its autonomy from the *nāḍu.* Although the *nāḍu* and *nagaram* were mutually supportive, the latter enjoyed a special status and preferential treatment at the hands of kings and royal officials. It was on equal footing with the *brahmadeya* and *nāḍu,* especially with regard to revenue collection, a responsibility shared by the *nagaram.* The *nagaram* had direct revenue arrangements with the centre and participated in a significant way in temple affairs sharing responsibility with the temple executives (Hall 1981, Champakalakshmi 1986b, 1988). Two institutions which thus brought the *nāḍus* closer together in a system of unified political organization and economic exchange were the *brahmadeya* and *nagaram,* both of which were used as interdependent agents of the Cōḷa state synthesis.

The Temple

The temple assumed the character of a 'superordinate' instrument of integration from the ninth century A.D. Under the middle Cōḷas (A.D. 985-1118) its role progressively diversified in the forging of institutional links for territorial sovereignty, particularly through the 'imperial' temples such as those at Tañjāvūr and Gangaikondacōḷapuram. The temple increasingly assumed the responsibility of management of the local distribution process with the transition towards greater royal favour bestowed on the temple and its staff. Supervisory functions were often transferred from local assemblies to temples (Hall 1980), especially due to huge temple endowments (Heitzman 1987). In most cases the temples located in

brahmadeyas and *taniyūrs* were still managed by *brāhmaṇa* assemblies (*sabhā*) and their committees. Temple administration was also shared by the dominant *vēḷāḷa* landed groups in the *ūrs*. However, the ties that may have existed between the local temple and local elite were broken by the expanding economy of the temple and management of resources across *nāḍu* limits and by the centralization measures of the kings through supervision of temple affairs by royal officials (*mūvēndavēḷār, kōyirramar*), 'auditing' or enquiring into temple endowments, scale of temple expenses and making reallocations (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Champakalakshmi 1981, Hall 1981, Subbarayalu 1982). The temple provided a foothold for the kings to intervene in local affairs.

The impressive economic outreach of the temples is best illustrated by the stupendous royal temples. In the case of Tañjāvūr it covered the whole Cōḷa kingdom and in politico-cultural centres like Kāñcīpuram it covered the respective *maṇḍalam*. In the arrangements for the huge endowments to these temples, the reciprocal flow of revenues from the peripheral to the core areas of the state and vice versa are attested by royal records. For Tañjāvūr it included even northern Sri Lanka, several *sabhās* and *nagarams* supplying paddy or commodity, ritual and other consumable articles for gold deposits received from the royal temple. For Kāñcīpuram, the endowments established links between the city's temples and its huge hinterland, Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, through such reciprocal flows.

The 'communal' organization of the production base (*nāḍu*) and the relative 'stability' of the agrarian structure claimed to have endured for over a millennium was steadily eroded by the differentiation introduced by other institutional forms and due to increase in private rights in land and to the hierarchical levels of authority emerging within the *nāḍu* chiefs and dominant peasant groups. The alliance of *brāhmaṇa* and dominant peasant proposed by the peasant state concept would thus seem to be an incorrect understanding or a reversal of the process of agrarian stratification. It should be seen more correctly as the emergence of landed elite groups, one from among the peasantry from below and the other from above through state initiative, with different caste and ritual

ranking as *brāhmaṇa* and *sat-śūdra* (Champakalakshmi 1989a, Subbarayalu 1989).

Caste and ritual ranking around the temple was another factor of social differentiation. The *paḷḷar* and *paraiyar*, working as agricultural labourers for *brāhmaṇas*, *vēḷāḷas* and the temple, were outcastes kept out of the temple precincts. Socio-economic stratification is also implied in temple tenancy, wherein higher and lower service groups of both *brāhmaṇas* and non-*brāhmaṇas* formed the tenants and cultivators, the lower service groups among *brāhmaṇas* being assigned a lower sub-caste status among the *brāhmaṇas*. Caste hierarchy also brought within its lower ranks various ethnic groups, that is, hill people etc. incorporated into the new agrarian organization through *nāḍu* expansion. Craft groups in the villages and urban localities and new entrants into the agricultural groups came to be organized under the dual Right and Left Hand castes, which emerged as a paradigmatic division[3] from the twelfth century A.D. (Champakalakshmi 1986b).

The rise of the *nagarattār* as a full fledged trading community in the ninth century A.D. also introduced another element of differentiation, the *nagarattār* assuming the *ceṭṭi* suffix. Kinship and marriage ties, which are believed to have fortified the internal coherence of the *nāḍu*, were also broken over time, for marriage networks over wider areas, that is, beyond *nāḍu* limits, both among agriculturists and pastoral groups, are known (Subbarayalu 1989).

Changes in the agrarian system in the form of complex tenures such as *kāṇi* holdings, a new tenure called *paṟṟu* from the twelfth century for service and military holdings and increase in temple holdings *(tirunāmattukkāṇi)*, led to a series of tensions among the *kāṇi* and *paṟṟu* holders *(mudalis)* and confrontation between them and the tenant culivators *(uḷukuḍi)*, the latter together with the *aḍimai* (slaves? or serfs?) being subject to the oppressive demands of landholders. In the clash of interests among landholding groups, the enormous tax burdens were passed on to the tillers (Karashima 1984, Tirumalai 1987, Heitzman 1987, Subbarayalu 1989). The twelfth century developments are interpreted as representing a situa-

3 See section on Society, p. 288.

tion of crisis. The *nagaram*'s expanding horizons and increasing urban activities, significantly altered their relationship with the *nāḍu*. Wealthy mearchants are seen to be forging alliances with local Cōḷa military subordinates, leading to fortified commercial centres and warlord rule (Hall 1980). A corresponding enhancement in the status of craftsmen, especially weavers and *rathakāras*, also introduced an important element of change in societal organization, by their seeking ritual mobility within the traditional structure of caste society through the Right and Left Hand divisions.

Socio-religious conflicts of the twelfth century also reflect a situation of crisis when the non-*brāhmaṇa* elements made a serious bid for a more direct share in temple administration. The rise and proliferation of non-*brāhmaṇa* Śaiva *maṭhas* marked this conflict over authority, leading to the emergence of a literary and religious sub-culture (*Śaiva Siddhānta*) from the peasant community (Stein 1980, 1984), who henceforth assumed the role of the custodians of religious canonical literature and administrators of the rich temple estates (Champakalakshmi 1979, 1986 b).

A supra-local organization called the *periya-nāḍu*, which arose in mid-eleventh century and is found to be active in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, has been understood as an overarching segment encapsulating the *nāḍu* segments, created by the *nāṭṭār* to protect their interests *vis-a'-vis* the Cōḷas, in response to their centralization efforts (Stein 1980, Hall 1980). Its composition was however not dominated by *vēḷāḷas*. On the contrary, it was a multi-caste or multi-ethnic organization of agriculturists, which originated in the drier areas north of the Kaveri and was active in the peripheral areas rather than the core area. Closely associated with the largest merchant body called the Five Hundred in commercially important centres, it appears to be a 'guild' of agriculturists mobilizing and exchanging food grains with the Five Hundred for other commodities (Champakalakshmi 1986a and b). With its impressive *praśasti* and prefix *cittiramēḷi*, this body jointly took decisions on cesses and tolls on merchandise. It could also have been an association of older landholding castes which arose as a counter to the new land-holding martial group of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries emerging as a result of an

increase in private landholdings. Similar organizations of the pastoral communities of different *kŏṭṭams* in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and of the *rathakāras* or craftsmen of different *vaḷanāḍus* in Cŏḷāmaṇḍalam are also known (Champakalakshmi 1988 and Subbarayalu 1989).

Society

In the studies on south Indian society, which, till the sixties, often formed a part of larger narratives of political history or monographs on society and polity, a major assumption or what may be called a recurring stereotype, has been the prevalence of the four-fold *varṇa* division into the *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya* and *śudra* in all the south Indian regions, irrespective of the absence of any such clear categories in the contemporary records (Minakshi 1977, Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Mahalingam 1967). The new approaches and sociological tools of analysis have shown that the *varṇa* concept can hardly be used to explain the differences in the regional specificities in social structures (Beck 1972, Stein 1980) except in so far as a polarization into the *brāhmaṇa* and *śūdra* (non-*brāhmaṇa*) castes is found to occur uniformly in all the regions, with a conspicuous absence of the *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* categories, especially in the Tamil region.

South Indian society cannot be expected to provide evidence of a neat categorization on the basis of the four *varṇas* which originally emerged in north India. The south Indian ruling families acquired *kṣatriya* or *brahma-kṣatriya* status through genealogical claims linking themselves with solar and lunar lineages and epic heroes and by taking on brāhmaṇical *gotra* affiliations, apart from giving themselves divine origins. The *vaiśya* as a *varṇa* category is not represented till the medieval times, when traders and commercially important groups such as bankers (*ceṭṭis, baṇajigas* and *kŏmaṭṭis*) came to be designated as *vaiśyas* in lexicographic works, or they themselves claimed *vaiśya* status in their inscriptional *praśastis* and *Purāṇas* in an attempt at establishing *vaiśya* origins. Interestingly, even the *vēḷāḷas,* the major agricultural community of the Tamil region objected to their being categorized as *śūdras*, when, in the nineteenth century, British administrators made attempts to list

the various socio-economic and ethnic groups under the neat *varṇa* categories.

The introduction of the *varṇa* order as a theoretical basis for social organization can be attributed to the emergence of *brahmadeya* or *brāhmaṇa* settlements and their proliferation under royal patronage from the Pallava times, although knowledge of this order is reflected even in early historic Tamil texts like the *Tolkāppiyam*. Recent researches have shown that it was through a process of integration by ritual ranking around the brahmanical temple that the various social and economic groups were provided with caste status and *jāti* labels under the *brāhmaṇa* and *śūdra varṇas*. The superior land controlling *vēḷāḷas*, however, are believed to have acquired a *sat-śūdra* status (superior among *śūdras*), while all other agricultural groups such as actual cultivators and labourers were pushed down the scale (Stein 1980). Specialization of occupation as in the case of trading saw the emergence of *nagarattār* as a full-fledged trading community by the ninth century A.D., but with no reference to a *vaiśya* status (Champakalakshmi 1986b). Diversification of economic activities around the temple and increase in craft production led to the emergence of new groups, which crystallized into *jātis*. Claims for a more privileged status divided these castes into the vertical order of Right and Left Hand, a paradigmatic division, which originated in the Tamil region and spread to southern Karnataka and Andhra regions by the twelfth century A.D.

Among the new approaches, the one which characterizes south Indian society as a segmentary peasant society, views the early medieval developments as deriving from a *brāhmaṇa-*dominant peasantry alliance and hence describes it as a tripartite division into *brāhmaṇa, vēḷāḷa* and the Right Hand (*valangai*) and Left Hand (*iḍangai*) castes (Stein 1980). There has been a general tendency to explain the dual division into Right and Left Hand castes as representing the struggle between landed, stable agricultural groups on the one hand and mobile, urban artisan and merchant groups on the other. Studies based on empirical data on the actual occurrence of this dual division point, however, to a regional and contextual variation in the groupings of the Right and Left Hand castes and their

historical evolution (Beck 1972, Appadurai 1974). The relationship between older peasant communities and newly emerging landed groups and between traditional artisanal groups and new craft gróups of the Cōla period and their spatial spread would also indicate a regional dimension and ecological basis to the nature of the division within the south Indian caste organization.

The dual division is also explained as a part of medieval movements for social mobility, especially of the artisan groups associated with temple building and other economic activities around the temple (Srinivasachari 1929, Ramaswamy 1985), which was most prolific in the Tamil region, as against the *sat-śūdra* status of the *vēḷaḷas*. Such a conflict is expressed to a lesser extent in the dual division of castes in the Andhra and Karnataka regions. The division itself never arose in Kerala.

The dual classification is also treated as a root paradigm whose function has been to provide a cultural tool for the integration of south Indian society and whose structure is essentially contextual and contrastive. Its function and structure are thus said to explain the regional variants in classifying different ethnic, occupational and sectarian groups. The metaphor of the vertical bifurcation of the body into the right and left is also seen as capable of giving expression simultaneously to a wide variety of conflicts, anamolies and antagonisms and to the underlying unity in the relation between the two units (Appadurai 1974).

Situations of conflict are represented by those between agricultural and artisanal groups, between recently Sanskritized hill and forest peoples, between homologous pairs of artisan castes (for example, weavers—*sāliyas* and *kaikkōḷas* in Tamil Nadu), between different merchant groups, between homologous pairs of untouchables (*paraiyan* and *cakkiliyan*), while anomalies are those representing claims by artisans to a brāhmaṇical or twice-born identity and sectarian conflicts are represented by those of the Vaiṣṇavas and Jainas in medieval Karnataka. However, within the Tamil society of early medieval period, conflicts were resolved by the enhancement of privileged status within the dual division. The *brāhmaṇas* and *vēḷaḷas* clearly remained out of this division till late

medieval times, when conflicts turned more violent and more visible particularly in urban contexts.

Urbanization

Supra-local integration has also been understood as a part of the urban processes, a major concern in recent studies. Urban studies have significantly altered perceptions of urban forms, institutions and their relations with the state. The early medieval urbanization was generated from within, due to centuries of agrarian expansion and diversification of economic activities. It was a process of re-urbanization in the entire region in which the form and meaning of towns like Kāñcīpuram were altered considerably from their older character, the latter determined largely by external factors like long distance trade in the early historic period (Champakalakshmi 1988).

By the close of the ninth century A.D. clusters of *brahmadēyas* and temple centres emerged as foci of urban growth. Such clusters have been located in the Kaveri delta, the Cōḷa resource base, where their residential seat 'Kuḍamukku-Palaiyārai' lay and in the Tamraparni-Ghatana valley, that is, Muḷḷi nāḍu where the Cōḷa-Pāṇḍya seat was located and which offers an interesting example of deliberate royal choice for development as a resource base in the Pāṇḍya region (Champakalakshmi 1979, 1986b). Another major consequence of this agrarian expansion was the emergence of the *nagaram*, the market centre, which arose in the ninth century A.D. in response to the exchange or marketing needs of the *nāḍus*. The increase in commercial activity led to the growth of a network of market centres (Hall 1980). The proliferation of the *nagaram* kept pace with the increase in commerce and with the Cōḷa expansionist ventures. Its conspicuous increase and wide distribution coincide with the period of the most powerful Cōḷa rulers—Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and Kulottunga I (985-1118)—a period marked by centralization efforts and patronage to traders and commercial enterprises. The *nagaram* now appeared even beyond the Cōḷa territories in the newly conquered areas giving access to powerful neighbouring kingdoms in south Karnataka and the Andhra region. A

partial monetization of the economy in the tenth-eleventh centuries further attests to the growth of urban activities. (Chattopadhyaya 1977, Champakalakshmi 1986a and b, 1988).

The development of a market hierarchy with the *nagaram* as its major link, is suggested on the basis of the model of networks and centres derived from that W. Skinner used for studying rural marketing in China (Hall 1980). The hierarchy linked villages with the *nagaram*, and *nagarams* vertically with *mānagaram* (royal centre and port) at the apex of a pyramid of different levels of exchange. Horizontal links between *nagarams* were also established thus cutting across *nāḍu* limits.

Nagarams became points of intersection in inland and interregional commerce with the revival of south Asian trade in the tenth century, points where itinerant trading organizations interacted with the *nagaram*, exchanging imported goods for local goods. The *nagaram* was brought into a wider network of overseas trade, in which a new set of protected mercantile towns called *erivīrappaṭṭaṇas* were established for the itinerant traders with royal sanction, acting as 'inland ports' or warehouses. Such towns came up on trade routes and in remote and inhospitable regions linking nuclear areas with commercially viable localities and coastal regions (Hall 1980, Champakalakshmi 1986a and b). Armed protection of such towns and mercenary troops moving with itinerant traders are two important features of medieval south Indian commerce.

The largest and most prominent of the itinerant trading associations or guilds was the Ayyāyoḷe 500 or the Tamil Tiśai Āyirattu Aiññūṟṟuvar. Guild activities spread to the Andhra and Karnataka regions in the wake of Cōḷa conquests and in Sri Lanka and south-east Asia due to conscious Cōḷa policy of facilitating the movement of traders and acquiring a trading presence in these regions. The new perspectives, derived from the study of the guilds have focused on the nature of their organization, hetertogenous composition and chronological and spatial spread (Abraham 1988). They also point to a diversification in trading activities due to a specialization in the marketing of goods like textiles and oil by sub-groups among the *nagarattār*, horses by foreign (Arab) traders and to the movement of goods by smaller merchant bodies like the *Maṇigrāmam* and foreign merchant organization like the

Añjuvaṇṇam (Champakalakshmi 1986a). Evidence of such diversification comes from all the regions of peninsular India, that is from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka.

As a major link in trading network merchant bodies not only provided the infra-structure for the movement of commodities, but also collaborated with local trading bodies and agriculturists, in assessing, levying and collecting cesses on goods passing through areas, where distribution centres came to be located. The close cooperation between traders and agriculturists is conspicuously recorded in the joint donations to religious institutions made by the Five Hundred with the *Cittirameḷi Periya Nāḍu* in the Tamil region, with *Okkalu* and *Kāmpulu* in Karnataka and Andhra. Imported commodities in sizeable quantities are recorded in inscriptions such as spices, semi-precious stones, incense which are conspicuous, while export of cotton textiles is also well attested (Abraham 1988).

The merchant body called the Five Hundred was not a single unified corporation. It was composed of widely disparate social groups, as well as affiliate craftsmen and semi-military groups. *Brāhmaṇa* participation in trade is indicated, especially in Karnataka, where, in the *agrahāras*, a supervisory interest was shown by the *brāhmaṇas* in return for a share in revenue (Abraham 1988). The identity of interests between *brāhmaṇas* and traders is also known from rurban centres, where temples and *maṭhas* controlled by *brāhmaṇas* in the Tamil region interacted with traders. The *maṭhas* of the twelfth century, both *brāhmaṇical* and non-*brāhmaṇical* (Śaiva *maṭhas*) attracted long distance trade and investment in this trade by such centres is another major factor of early medieval urbanization. It is noteworthy that the inscriptions of the Five Hundred not only occur in these centres but significantly refer to the endowments of merchant bodies to the monastic organizations of Kālāmukha Śaivism in the ninth-tenth centuries and to those of the Tamil Śaiva movement of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries (Champakalakshmi 1986b, 1988).

Different Structures of Control

The nature of Cōḷa state control was not uniform in the whole of the Tamil macro-region. The Cōḷas evolved different

structures of control (Subbarayalu 1982, Heitzman 1987). In the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍi maṇḍalams, the *vaḷanāḍu*, an artificial revenue/political unit was introduced by re-organizing the *nāḍus* into a larger unit, after revenue surveys and assessments were carried out in all the zones by A.D. 1003. The *vaḷanāḍu* had consciously chosen natural bounadaries like water courses. In the *vaḷanāḍu* formation *nāḍus* were split under different *vaḷanāḍus*, villages from one *nāḍu* transferred to another, *brahmadeya* and *devadāna* villages taken away from *nāḍu* jurisdiction. Chieftaincies were also brought under the *vaḷanāḍu* scheme (Subbarayalu 1982). The new revenue unit disturbed to a considerable extent the integrity and 'insularity' of the peasant region, *nāḍu*.

Actual political control was achieved by the Cōḷas through structuring their institutional elements to suit the sub-regional differences in the different *maṇḍalams*, in cognition of the need for different regional structures. In Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, the earlier *kōṭṭam* or larger pastoral-cum-agricultural region was retained. The systematic use of the *tankūru* (*taniyūr*) in this region as a separate revenue unit indicates a different subsystem[4] of control evolved by the Cōḷas. To a limited extent the *taniyūr* occurs even within the Cōḷa heartland. The *taniyūr* evolved out of major *brahmadeyas* and temple settlements and acquired several hamlets (*piḍāgais*) and revenue villages (*puṟams*) and even craft centres under its jurisdiction. Tax settlements between *taniyūr* and the king's government were direct. A new type of *nāḍu* called the *pēriḷamai-nāḍu* evolved around *taniyūrs* incorporating the villages attached to them (Champakalakshmi 1988). The *pēriḷamaiyār* were *vēḷālas* under tenancy cultivation to the landlords, chiefly *brāhmaṇas* of the *taniyūr* (Subbarayalu 1989). The *taniyūrs* also emerged as foci of urban concentration, creating different levels of an urban hierarchy and performing central place functions. The *vaḷanāḍu*, *pēriḷamaināḍu* and *taniyūr* illustrate the defining and redefining of agrarian regions and revenue organization by the will of a political authority, that is, by the Cōḷas (Champakalakshmi 1988).

---

4 Restructuring of economy and society and maintaining a series of subsystems become necessary in an imperial system (Thapar, 1987).

In Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam, the earlier structures remained undisturbed, but were vastly improved upon by intensive agrarian expansion and organization in the wet zones of the Tampraparni valley. Another mechanism of control was the stationing of *nilaippaḍai* (army camps) in strategic locations. Units of the army were also stationed in big trading centres to protect the temple endowments as in the Kongumaṇḍalam, which, in effect, introduced a line of communications in the transit zones of the Coimbatore-Salem and Pudukkottai regions.

The concept of the *maṇḍalam* itself was an innovation by which the traditional politico-geographical territories were redesignated and which points to a reorganization of the entire territory. Thus a Cōḷa-Pāṇḍya was appointed to rule over the Pāṇḍya region and *maṇḍala-mudalis* over the other sub-regions. The distribution of tax terms and their frequency lends additional supportive evidence to the existence of different administrative procedures and economic control in the *maṇḍalams* (Karashima 1984).

Lesser chieftains in Cōḷa polity represent another distinct level of intermediate strata, whose role was significant in the building up of Cōḷa power, particularly in the early Cōḷa period (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Govindasamy 1979, Subbarayalu 1982). Arrangements made under different terms with some of the powerful chiefs, as in Tirukkōyilūr in the peripheral riverine tracts, allowed a certain amount of local autonomy in revenues in return for military support (Heitzman 1987) or in return for expansion of trade networks as in the case of the Koḍumbāḷūr chiefs in the drier Pudukkottai zone, a buffer between Cōḷa heartland and the Pāṇḍya region (Abraham 1988). Some were reinstalled after conquest and others were newly created dominant lineages supporting the king in return for local control, resembling a sort of feudal political subordination. Ranking could well have been an important factor in the levels of authority among such lineage chiefs (Chattopadhyaya 1983). Many of them were assigned civil and military service tenures or policing rights called *pāḍikāval* (Subbarayalu, 1982). In the conventional view, they were feudatories, that is, *sāmanta* (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Govindasamy 1979) and in the segmentary state perspective

they were local chiefs thrown up from the peasant base or older chiefs never subordinated fully to Cōḷa rule (Stein 1980). The fact, however, is that they disappeared from the records during the middle Cōḷa period when the *vāḷanāḍus* encompassed their territories. They re-emerged into prominence in the late twelfth century posing a serious political threat to the Cōḷas through coalitions among themselves or with new chiefs or traditional enemies of the Cōḷas (Subbarayalu 1982).

Taxation and Cōḷa Resource Base

Conventional views perceived the existence of a well-organized taxation system both under the Pallavas and Cōḷas. References to *Puravu Vari tiṇaikkalam* in Cōḷa records were interpreted as indicative of a regular land revenue department and to the *Varippottagam* as a carefully maintained record of land rights and taxes based on enquiries and surveys and kept up-to-date by fresh entries. The officials of this department were likened to modern administrators. A distinction was, however, made between 'central' taxes and local cesses, the latter collected by local bodies, with the 'central' government ever ready to assist them, when necessary, in enforcing their demands (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Mahalingam 1967). No flow of revenues from the localities to the centre is recognized in the segmentary state perceptions, despite the numerically significant references to land taxes (*puravu, kaḍamai, iṟai*) collected by 'central' officers. Statistical analysis of the chronological and spatial distribution of tax terms and the context of their occurrence have however shown that the major land tax (*kaḍamai*) was uniform, along with a number of smaller ones related to land (Karashima 1984). Mechanisms of collection, storage and revenue transfers from the locality to the government are known through the references to granaries at different levels (*ūr* and *nāḍu*) and the *nāṭṭumudal* (total revenue from a *nāḍu*) collected for the state by the *nāḍu* and by the *vāḷanāḍu* above it (Subbarayalu 1982, Shanmugam 1987). The *sabhā* and *nagaram* negotiated revenues directly with the state. Non-agricultural taxes increased over time and became prominent in the late Cōḷa period, reflecting an increase in craft production and trade activities (Champakalakshmi 1988).

Evidence of official involvement in taxation and regular tax transfers, greater concentration of tax collecting power in the hands of superior agencies and a decline in local cesses, is consistent and at times impressive (Subbarayalu, 1982, 1989). Local forms of collection and a re-investment of such revenues in the regional economy circumvented problems of central collection and re-distribution (Heitzman 1987). In the south Indian context, as in others, it has been suggested that resource mobilization by the state cannot be separated from the process of redistribution of resources to integrative elements within the state structure, that is, *brahmadeya* and the temple. The segmentary state concept has failed to perceive this interlocking of resource and revenue appropriation, for it separates state structure from state ritual (Chattopadhyaya 1983). The same is true of the theory of "politics of plunder", which overlooks this interdependent arrangment as well as the state's active interest in trade and commercial ventures as a second resource base. It views Cōḷa warfare as dictated by economic needs to secure access to "free floating resources" through predatory raids (Spencer 1983) and not as a policy of expanding trading interests through overseas expeditions, for royalty and the temple were the biggest consumers of luxury items which such commerce provided. Tolls at royal ports, the presence of foreign (Śrīvijayan) agents at Cōḷa ports, and missions to China were also aimed at securing a second source of revenue (Abraham 1988).

Bureaucracy

In keeping with the description of the Cōḷa state as centralized with a Byzantine royalty of imperial dimensions, the conventional approach looked at the numerous inscriptional references to *adikāris* and titled personages as representing a powerful bureaucracy, hierarchically organized and thoroughly efficient. It was distinguished from a set of local officials, particularly village officials and local magnates (Nilakanta Sastri 1975, Mahalingam 1967). The segmentary state concept denies the existence of a powerful bureaucracy, treating all the titles including the *adikāri* and *mūvēndavēḷān* as those of powerful local chiefs and magnates rooted in the

locality rather than having significant links with the king's government. They are seen as the political arm of the dominant peasantry in their respective *nāḍus* (Stein 1980). Modifications of this approach conceded that the Cōḷa state was lightly bureaucratized (Hall 1981). More recent empirical studies based on a statistical analysis and concordance of personal names and designations in the Cōḷa inscriptions, the chronological and topographical distribution of titles, status terms, etc., make a clear distinction between terms referring to office and status, between officers central and local, between officials and locality leaders pointing out evidence of a hierarchically organized officialdom in revenue administration (Karashima et al. 1978).

Local chiefs with titles like *nāḍālvān* signifying control over *nāḍu*, had close links with the king's government. Feudatory titles with *arayan* suffix signified those occupying positions in the revenue department and army. The *mūvēndavēḷān* and *brahmarāya* were titles bestowed on officers of some rank, having close connections with the king. The former provided the main political links between the king and the locality as a royal official. However, such title holders or potentially dominant elements may well have emerged from within the agrarian base. Although no clear evidence of a ramified bureaucratic system is available, 'titled' officers may still be viewed as arms for royal penetration into local affairs, performing crucial roles for the extension of royal influence "outside the framework of a centralized bureaucracy." Nonetheless, the land revenue department exhibits centralized features with hierarchical roles assigned to its officers and scope for vertical mobility which are the marks of a bureaucratic state organ. Ranking of officers under the categories of higher (*perundaram*) and lower (*śiṟutaram*) grades for both the 'civil' and 'military' officers and distinctions made between those at the royal court (*uḍan kūṭṭam*) and those touring the country (*viḍaiyil*) also strengthen the notion of a bureaucracy, however light it may have been. The presence of the king's government in the localities may be hierarchized as follows : the *maṇḍala mudali* (*maṇḍalam* level), *nāḍu vagai* (*nāḍu* level), *mudaligaḷ* and *madhystha* at the village level, the last one being the most important executive link between the village

and the government (Subbarayalu 1982, Heitzman 1987).

The evidence on military organization is undoubtedly meagre and susceptible to alternative interpretations. The major argument of the segmentary state concept on the lack of such an organization with central armed forces recruited by clearly defined criteria, is derived from this lacuna. Cōla military forces are therefore believed to be an assemblage of diverse warrior groups or composed of discrete units, "segments" (Spencer 1983), peasant militia or caste and guild armies (Stein 1980) due to the oft-used nomenclature namely, Right Hand and Left Hand (*valangai* and *idangai*) for various groups. According to this view royal appellations to military groups would point to their political allegiance rather than their status as permanent units in a standing army. Hence it is held that their conventional description as 'regiments' in the manner of divisions within a unified military structure (Nilakanta Sastri 1975) is hard to sustain. Similarly, despite the naval enterprises recorded in inscriptions, the segmentary model is constrained to look at Cōla overseas expeditions, as of an 'ad hoc armada' carrying warriors and not that of a permanent navy (Spencer 1983). The picture, however, is by no means as clear as it is assumed in this perspective, for the *vīrabhoga* and *padaipparru* grants and the *nilaippadai* or army camps stationed at strategic points would together provide evidence of a royal army at least upto the twelfth century A.D. Officers of the army such as *padai mudali* and *nāyagam* are also known from inscriptional records. The *perundaram* and *sirutaram* grades were prevalent among the Right Hand *vēḷaikkāra* units, yet another pointer to a regular army. Armies of local chiefs undoubtedly supplemented royal military expeditions (Subbarayalu 1982, 1989).

Ideology and the State

Studies on state formation and state structures have often stressed the importance of the role of ideology, despite the inherent analytical and conceptual difficulties that the notion of ideology poses. To understand the ideological basis and the complex forms of legitimation and ideological apparatuses of the medieval south Indian state, the inter-relationships between

religion and art and art and politics, that is, political iconography need to be closely examined.

In conventional approaches, religious ideas and institutions were discussed in isolation from the nexus of social, political and economic relationships (Minakshi 1977, Nilakanta Sastri 1975). The inter-connections are more clearly perceived in the new approaches where they are seen as being of ideological significance influencing the character of the state.

In the early medieval polities of the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas, genealogies were major ideological constructs. Claims to divine descent and *kṣatriya* status and the gift (*dāna*) provided a new conceptual and expansive basis of sovereignty. The royal gift (of land), its scale and capacity for incorporating lesser chiefs into an expanding political system was the chief means of royal legitimation and political synthesis (Dirks 1976). The Purāṇic worldview replaced the sacrificial one (*yajña*), Purāṇic deities replaced Vedic deities, as seen in the equation of royalty with Viṣṇu or Śiva (Champakalakshmi 1989b).

The Cōḷa genealogies also may be regarded as one of the complex ideological claims for sovereignty (Spencer 1984). The more significant claims were their association with the Kaveri region, introduction of extensive agricultural activities and above all the building of temples representing a "complex of ideological apparatuses" (Champakalakshmi 1989b) through which they tried to reach out to their territorial domain (Chattopadhyaya 1983). The separation of the ritual and temporal domains in the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' ignores the interdependence of the sacred and temporal domains and the fact that in the medieval Indian context one was defined by the other. The difficulties of differentiating between the 'ritual' elements and the 'bureaucratic' elements in the royal records have often led to a misreading of the ideological underpinnings of the state (Stein 1980, Hall 1980, Spencer 1983). The political basis of integration cannot be resolved by the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' for often it was a means to implement power. Royal orders to local assemblies have a more direct relevance to political control (Kulke 1982) and were not mere ritual documents.

In the 'segmentary state' theory as applied to the Pallava-Cōḷa state, religion, that is, *bhakti* or what is described as

devotional temple based "Hinduism" (Stein 1980) is believed
to have served the *brāhmaṇa*-peasant alliance which constituted
an underpinning of localized self governing peasant regions.
It helped to legitimize the dominance of privileged elements
within the peasantry, that is, *nāṭṭār* on whom the *brahmadēya*
depended (Stein 1980, Spencer 1983). Contrary perspectives,
which perceive the reality of royal power in the localities, take
the opposite position, namely, that it was the ideology of the
ruling dynasty and not of the supposed *brāhmaṇa*-dominant
peasant alliance. The Cōḷas, in particular, adopted, elaborated
and zealously practised this ideology through various mea-
sures, like the collection of the *bhakti* hymns, their popular-
ization through temple rituals and grants for such rituals and
the construction of temples in all the centres associated with
the *bhakti* hymns. The temple based *bhakti* (Narayanan and
Veluthat 1978) developed into an universal norm transcending
religious and sectarian differences and acquired a centrality
providing a common focus, the temple as the super-ordinate
and innovative focus, that is, for restructuring society and
economy and symbolizing royal power (Champakalakshmi
1986b, 1989b).

The Cōḷas gave permanence to all cult centres, through the
cult of the Śiva *linga* in particular, thus replicating the temple's
role in each one of them through a systematic renovation in
stone of old brick shrines and construction of new ones. The
temple assumed the character of the chief ideological appara-
tus for evolving the poltical iconography of the Cōḷas through
the stupendous royal temple projects, marking the apogee of
the *drāviḍa* style of architecture and allied arts. A near total
identity was established between God and the king, which
enabled the sacred and temporal domains to coincide. The
bhakti ideology assisted in the process of enhancing the power
of both the divine and human sovereigns through the
symbolism of the cosmos/temple/territory (Champakalashmi
1986 b).

Temple geography and ecology have provided a useful
method of contextualizing the data on temple distribution and
its correlation with actual politico-economic integration. The
importance of this study for establishing dynastic hinterlands
has been demonstrated for the Pallava-Pāṇḍya period (Spencer

and Hall 1974). For the Cōḷa period the direct relationship between temple geography and the nature of agrarian expansion, both spatially and chronologically and the integration of *nāḍu/kūrṛam* and *kōṭṭam* into the new agrarian order have emerged in the studies on settlement patterns (Champakalakshmi 1989c). In the subsequent economic diversification leading to the growth of urban centres, the temple's role has been significant. The character and morphology of these towns/cities were determined by the temple, which formed the core of a settlement and its expansion in a horizontal pattern with a remarkably clear horizontal stratification of space for hierarchical caste and occupational groups. This process is illustrated by both the single-temple and multi-temple complexes of urban growth (Champakalakshmi 1986b, 1988).

The study of temple art and architectural styles in the Pallava-Cōḷa periods (seventh to thirteenth centuries A.D.) has demonstrated the importance of art history in providing additional insights into the role of the temple in the socio-political and cultural integration of this region. The *drāviḍa* style of architecture evolved from a small, unpretentious shrine (*garbha-gṛha*) with a moderate sized tower (*śikhara*) and a pillared porch (*ardha-maṇḍapa*) in front, together called the *vimāna*, into a vertically dominant pyramidal structure of impressive heights by the eleventh century A.D. (Srinivasan 1958, 1965, Soundararajan 1978). Under the Cōḷas, it achieved a remarkable balance in plan, design and elevation, as in the royal temples at Tañjāvūr and Gangaikoṇḍacōḷapuram, with the addition of large pillared halls in a single alignment. Enclosed by a courtyard (*prākāra*) with entrance gateways (*gopuras*) at the cardinal points, it acquired subsidiary shrines in the courtyard for the lesser gods and guardian deities positioned at various points as per canonical requirements. Two of these subsidiary shrines significantly housed the Tamil deity Muruga, which the brāhmaṇical pantheon accepted as a member of Śiva's family, and goddess Pārvati or Umā, who in each centre took the place of the local mother goddess incorporated into Purāṇic pantheon. The whole complex of shrines followed closely the symbolism of the cosmos/territory (Champakalakshmi 1986b). The temple's subsequent expansion

horizontally into a huge complex of structures in the late Cōḷa and post-Cōḷa periods, with several pillared halls, additional enclosures with towering gateways (Harle 1963) marks a further elaboration of the temple's role in incorporating various levels of society, that is, different socio-economic groups, in a complex of relationships through the temple's rituals and activities—a relationship which reflects socio-political dominance and stratification (Champakalakshmi 1982a, 1986b). At the apex of this society stood the royal family, as the authors and patrons of the temple, who were invariably associated with the main structures like the shrines (vimānas) and gateways (gopuras). Royalty was followed by the ritually pure brāhmaṇa priests performing worship, an administrative elite, dominant agrarian and mercantile groups involved in temple administration and the hierarchy ended up with the lower categories of agricultural worker, craftsmen and menials in the temple service.

Rock-cut architecture and its allied technique of rock-carvings dominated Pallava-Pāṇḍya art of the seventh-ninth centuries, while the structural mode replaced it entirely by the tenth century A.D. on account of its potentialities for the horizontal spread of temple sites as nuclei of agrarian settlements and for the expansion and concentration of temple complexes in the manifestation of urban forms and space (Champakalakshmi 1979, 1986b and 1988).

The evolution of iconography follows a similar pattern in the ideological expressions of the ruling families and their brāhmaṇa ideologues. Starting from the rich Purāṇic themes in the large scale narrative panels of the Pallava period comparable to those of the Deccan under the Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi and Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Manyaketa (Srinivasan 1958, Dehejia 1977) the iconographic content moves on from a narrative to a predominantly iconic representation in Cōḷa temples of the āgamic canons, in a standardized scheme of icons in temple niches, main and subsidiary shrines, adding to its repertoire the apotheosized bhakti saints of both the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects, particularly the latter. Images in stone and bronze received special attention from those in power. Not surprisingly, Cōḷa sculptures and bronzes represent to many people the apogee of south Asian sculpture, the most

remarkable being the bronzes of Śiva as Naṭarāja, Tripurāntaka and Somāskanda (Barrett 1965, 1975, Nagaswamy 1983). The narrative method continued but in rather diminutive panels depicting hagiographical themes.

The study of the state and economy in south India involves, as elsewhere, a systematic and methodologically sound analysis of the relations of production, of politics, culture and ideology. Economic and political structures cannot be treated as static phenomena as the conventional historiography has done, nor can they be explained satisfactorily by the super-imposition of highly abstracted theories and models. For the long period of Pallava and Cōḷa domination, that is, 600 years, a unitary chronological framework and a single model application, as in the segmentary state concept, fail to grapple with the complexity of the evidence. The Pallava state emerged in the eighth century A.D. more as a system of alliances with long established chieftaincies and entrenched peasant groups and marked the beginnings of an integrative polity through institutional means sponsored by the rulers (Champakalakshmi 1982 b). In the evolution of the Cōḷa state empiricists have postulated three distinct phases. For the early phase (850-985) they concur with the 'segmentary' organization based on communal property, autonomous peasant regions and large vestiges of the earlier tribal forms. The second or what is called the "imperial" phase (985-1118) is shown to be different due to the growth of private property, well stratified society and powerful monarchy and clear evidence of measures of centralization. In the third and last phase (1118-1279) an "agrarian crisis" is located, brought about by increasing social differentiation, private landholdings, "temple" urbanization and revival of chiefly authority. These changes are interpreted as a move towards "political feudalization." The decline of the Cōḷa state is attributed to its inability to cope with these changes in the face of decreasing revenue flows and diminishing officialdom (Subbarayalu 1982, Karashima 1984, Heitzman 1987).

Bibliography

Abraham Meera 1988. *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, South Asian Studies, Heidelberg, No. XVIII (Delhi: Manohar).

Altekar A. S. 1967. *Rashrakutas and Their Times* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency). (second revised edition)

Appadorai A. 1936. *Economic Conditions in Southern India*. 1000-1500 A.D., 2 Volumes (Madras: University of Madras).

Appadurai Arjun 1974. "Right and Left Hand Castes in South India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XI, Nos. 2-3, pp. 216-259.

Balambal V. 1978. *Feudatories of South India: 800-1070 A.D.* (Allahabad: Chugh Publications).

Balasubramaniam S. R. 1971. *Early Cola Temples (A.D. 907-985)* (New Delhi: Orient Longman).

—— 1975. *Middle Cola Temples (A.D. 985-1070)* (New Delhi: Thomson Press India Ltd.).

—— 1979. *Later Cola Temples (A.D. 1070-1280)* (Madras: Mudgala Trust).

Barrett Douglas 1965. *Early Cola Bronzes*, Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, VIII, Bombay.

—— 1975. *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture (866-1014 A.D.)* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.).

Basavaraja K. R. 1983. *Administration Under the Chalukyas of Kalyana* (Madras: New Era Publications).

Beck, E. F. Brenda 1972. *Peasant Society in Konku—A Study of Right and Left Sub-Castes in South India* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia).

Champakalakshmi R. 1979. "Growth of Urban Centres in South India: Kudamukku-Palaiyarai, the Twin-City of the Colas." *Studies in History*, Vol. I, No. 1, January-June 1979, pp 1-30.

—— 1981. "Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India." A Review Article. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3 and 4, pp 411-426.

—— 1982a. "The Dravida Style of Architecture: A Historical Perspective." *Indian Horizons*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2.

—— 1982b. "Introduction." *Studies in History"*, Vol. II, No. 2,

July-December 1982, pp. 161-166.

———— 1986a. "Urban Processes in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu." S. Bhattacharya and R. Thapar eds, *Situating Indian History* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press), 34-105.

———— 1986b. "Urbanisation In South India : The Role of Ideology and Polity." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 47th Session, Srinagar.

———— 1988. "The Urban Configurations of Tondaimandalam : The Kancipuram and Madras Regions." Working Paper series, No. 2, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

———— 1989a. "The Agrarian Order in Early Tamil Nadu : Problems and Perspectives." Paper presented at the Seminar on "The Agrarian Order in South India"— ICHR Seminar held in the University of Mangalore, 1989 (under publication).

———— 1989b. "Ideology and the South Indian State." Paper presented at the Seminar on "The State in Pre-Colonial South India." Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 1989 (under publication).

———— 1989c. "The Study of Settlement Patterns in the Cola period : Some Perspectives." *Man and Environment* XIV (I), pp 91-101.

Chattopadhyaya B. D. 1977. *Coins and Currency Systems in South India* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

———— 1983. "Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India : Problems of Perspective." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 44th Seminar, Burdwan.

Dehejia, Vidya 1977. *Namakkal Caves* (Madras : Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaelogy).

Derrett J. D. M. 1957. *The Hoysalas : A Medieval Indian Royal Family* (Madras : Oxford University Press).

Dikshit G. S. 1964. *Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka* (Dharwar : Karnatak University).

Dirks Nicholas B. 1976. "Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 21, pp. 125-157.

Eschmann A., H. Kulke and G. C. Tripathi 1978. *The Cult of*

Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa (New Delhi : South Asia Institute, Heidelberg).

Gopal B. R. 1982. *Minor Dynasties of South India* (Madras : New Era Publications).

Gopalan R. 1928. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (Madras : University of Madras).

Govindasamy M. S. 1965. *The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History* (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University).

———— 1979. *The Role of Feudatories in Later Chola History* (Annamalainagar : Annamalai University).

Gunawardana R. A. L. H. 1984. "Inter-Societal Transfer of Hydraulic Technology in Pre-colonial South Asia : Some Reflections Based on a Preliminary Investigation." *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu, (South East Asian Studies)*, Tokyo, Vol. 22, No. 2, Sept 1984, pp. 115-142.

Gurukkal Rajan 1980. "The Socio-Economic Milieu of the Kerala Temple : A Functional Analysis." *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 2, Jan-June 1980, pp 1-14.

———— 1984. *The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pandyas, c. A.D. 600-100*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

———— 1986. "Aspects of the Reservoir System of Irrigation in the Early Pandya State." *Studies in History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, New Series, July-Dec 1986, pp. 155-164.

Hall, R. Kenneth 1980. *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Colas* (New Delhi : Abhinav).

———— 1981. "Peasant State and Society in Chola Times : A View from the Tiruvidaimarudur Urban Complex." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3-4, pp. 393-410.

Harle J. C. 1963. *Temple Gateways in South India. The Architecture and Iconography of the Chidambaram Gopuras* (Oxford : Bruno Cassirer).

Heitzman James 1987. "State Formation in South India, 850-1280." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Jan-March 1987, pp. 35-61.

Jha D. N. 1984. "Validity of the 'Brahmana Peasant Alliance' and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India." *Social Science Probings*, June 1984, pp. 270-296.

Karashima N. and B. Sitaraman 1972. "Revenue Terms in Cola

Inscriptions." *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 5, Tokyo, pp. 87-117.

—— Subbarayalu and Matsui Toro 1978. *A Concordance of the Names in the Cola Inscriptions* (Madurai : Sarvodaya Lakkaiya Pannai).

—— 1984. *South Indian History and Society-Studies From Inscriptions, A.D. 850-1800* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Krishna Murari 1977. *The Chalukyas of Kalyani (From Circa 973 A.D. to 1200 A.D.)* (Delhi : Concept Publishing Company).

Kulke Hermann 1982. "Fragmentation and Segmentation Versus Integration? Reflections on the concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History." *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, No. 2, July-Dec 1982, pp. 237-264.

Kuppuswamy G. R. 1975. *Economic Conditions in Karnataka (A.D. 973-A.D. 1336)* (Dharwar : Karnatak University).

Kumar Dharma 1985. "Private Property in Asia? The Case of Medieval South India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 27, No. 2, April 1985, pp. 340-367.

Leela Shanthakumari S. 1986. *History of the Agraharas in Karnataka, 400-1300* (Madras : New Era Publications).

Ludden David 1979. "Patronage and Irrigation in Tamil Nadu : A Long Term View." *The Indian Economic and Social Review* XVI, No. 3, pp. 347-365.

—— 1985. *Peasant History in South India*, Princeton. (Also paperback published by OUP, Delhi, 1989.)

Mahalingam T. V. 1967. *South Indian Polity*, 2nd edition (Madras : University of Madras).

—— 1969. *Kancipuram in Early South Indian History* (Madras : Asia Publishing House).

Minakshi C. 1977. *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas* (Madras : University of Madras). (Revised edition)

Nagaswamy R. 1983. *Masterpieces of Early South Indian Bronzes* (New Delhi : National Museum Publication).

Narayanan M. G. S. 1972. *Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Kulasekhara Empire, c. A.D. 800-1124.* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Kerala).

—— 1977. *Re-Interpretations in South Indian History*

(Trivandrum : College Book House).

—— and Kesavan Veluthat 1978. "Bhakti Movement in South India." In S. C. Malik ed., *Indian Movement : Some Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reform* (Simla : Indian Institute of Advanced Studies).

—— 1985. "New Trends—A Case Study of the Chola Times." Presidential Address, Socio-Economic History Section, *South Indian History Congress* V Session, Mysore.

Nilakanta Sastri K. A. 1929. *The Pandyan Kingdom From the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century* (London : Luzac and Co.).

—— 1958. *A History of South India, From Pre-historic Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (Madras : Oxford University Press). (Second edition)

—— 1975. *The Colas* (Madras : University of Madras). (Reprint)

Ramaswamy Vijaya 1985. *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Ramesh K. V. 1970. *A History of South Kanara (From the Earliest Times to the Fall of Vijayanagara)* (Dharwar : Karnatak University).

—— 1984. *Chalukyas of Vatapi* (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan).

Shanmugam P. 1987. *The Revenue System of the Cholas, 850-1279* (Madras : New Era Publications).

Sivathamby K. 1974. "Early South Indian Society and Economy : The Tinai Concept." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, No. 5, Dec. 1974, pp. 20-37.

Soundararajan K. V. 1978. *Arts of South India : Tamil Nadu and Kerala* (Delhi : Sundeep Prakashan).

Southall A. W. 1956. *Alur Society* (Cambridge : W. Heffer).

Spencer G. W. 1969. "Religious Network and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. XII, Pt 1, pp. 42-56.

—— 1970. "The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Saivite Hymns." *NUMEN : International Review of the History of Religion*, Vol. 17, pp. 232-244.

—— and Hall Kenneth 1974. "Toward an Analysis of Dynastic Hinterlands. The Imperial Cholas of 11th Century South India." *Asian Profile*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Feb. 1974), pp. 51-62.

—— 1983. *The Politics of Expansion—The Cola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya* (Madras : New Era Publications).

—— 1984. "Heirs Apparent : Fiction and Function in Chola Mythical Genealogies." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 4.

Srinivasachari C. S. 1929. "The Origin of the Right and Left Caste Divisions." *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Vol. IV, Pts. 1 and 2 (July-Oct 1929), pp. 77-85.

Srinivasan K. R. 1965. *Cave Temples of the Pallavas* (New Delhi : Archaeological Survey of India).

—— 1958. "The Pallava Architecture of South India." *Ancient India*, No. 14, Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, pp. 114-138.

Stein Burton 1980. *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press).

—— 1984. "Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects." In B. Stein's *All the Kings' Mana. Papers on Medieval South Indian History* (Madras : New Era Publications), pp. 282-301.

—— 1985. "Politics, Peasants and Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India." In J. Byres and H. Mukhia (eds.), *Feudalism and Non-European Societies* (London : Frank Caff).

Subbarayalu Y. 1973. *Political Geography of the Chola Country*, (Madras : State Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu).

—— 1976. *The State in Medieval South India—600-1350* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Madurai : Kamaraj University).

—— 1982. "The Cola State." *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (July-Dec, 1982) pp. 265-306.

—— 1989. "The Cola State Re-Considered." Paper presented at the Seminar on "The State in Pre-Colonial South India." Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 1989 (under publication).

Subrahmanyam Sanjay 1986. "Aspects of State Formation in South India and South East Asia 1500-1650." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, pp. 357-377.

Sundaram K. 1968. *Economic and Social Conditions in Medieval*

Andhra (Madras : Triveni Publishers).

Thapar R. 1987. "State and Empire : An Attempt at a Definition." *Teaching Politics*, 13 (3-4), pp. 139-148.

Tirumalai R. 1987. *Land Grants and Agrarian Relations in Cola and Pandya Times* (Madras : University of Madras).

Veluthat Kesavan 1978. *Brahman Settlements in Kerala* (Calicut : Sandhya Publications).

——— 1979. "The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement." Indian History Congress, Proceedings, Waltair.

Yazdani G. 1960. *The Early History of the Deccan*, 2 vols. (Oxford : Oxford University Press).

VIII

State and Economy in North India: Fourth Century to Twelfth Century

B. D. CHATTOPADHYAYA

To start with a somewhat general statement, the bulk of historical writings on the period which extends from the fourth to the twelfth century A.D. have perhaps never characterized it as an undifferentiated span of history but have, on the other hand, stressed broad differences between its two major segments. One segment corresponds to the period of Gupta rule (beginning of the fourth to the middle of the sixth century) and the other to the post-Gupta phase extending approximately down to the close of the twelfth century when Turkish power started to gain firm political foothold in north India. The key element in this kind of differentiation—a differentiation which continues to figure prominently in many history textbooks—is the way the nature of Gupta rule is perceived among historians. The Guptas are seen to represent, like their predecessors the Mauryas, an era of empire. An empire is perceived as a political structure assiduously built by the military exploits of several charismatic royal personalities; it was simultaneously an outcome of the liberation of northern India from long-standing foreign rule and political unification achieved by successfully suppressing centrifugal elements. In the case of the Guptas, their rise has been seen against the background of the presence of different pockets of power in north India: those controlled by the last rulers of the 'foreign' Kuṣāṇas; the gaṇa-saṁgha janapadas, unevenly distributed between Punjab and U.P. Himalayas to Haryana and Rajasthan; and petty rulers of what have been called 'indigenous states' (B. Lahiri 1974). From this perspec-

tive of looking at the history of the emergence as well as the structure of the Gupta State, the Gupta State was essentially the type of state which was expected to exist and which represented the norm. States represented by kingdoms of smaller dimensions were deviations from the standard and their presence on the political map only pointed to a situation in which centrifugal trends prevailed. The post-Gupta period, despite the presence of comparatively large-sized kingdoms such as those of the Gurjara-Pratihāras (second quarter of the eighth to the middle of the tenth century) and the Pālas (middle of the eighth to the early twelfth century) and despite creditable achievements of individual monarchs (Majumdar R. C. 1962, Preface), marked a fall from the standard.

The above statement, rather a simplistic one, was made with the objective of underlining two points with which it is necessary to be familiar at the start of this essay. One, in writings on early India in general, correlation between a state structure perceived as an empire and social and economic development has become almost axiomatic. The case of the Gupta Empire is excellently illustrative of this supposed correlation. We quote below from two publications which belong to the category of extensively used text-books :

A. "... the Gupta empire ... at full maturity, *once more* brings unity, peace and prosperity over nearly the whole of Northern India" (Majumdar R. C. 1962, Preface; italics added).
"... the greater part of the country undoubtedly enjoyed high prosperity" (Ghosal 1962).
B. "The imperial Guptas with whom the volume opens ably countered the centrifugal forces in Northern India and the kingdom, established by Chandragupta I ... was shortly converted by his son, Samudragupta, into an empire. The Gupta empire, reared up by a succession of competent rulers, gave north India not only political stability and imperial peace, but also set an exemplary standard in all departments of life and culture. Indeed, the advent of the Guptas on the political stage ushered in an epoch which has rightly been called the Golden Age or the Classical Period of Indian history ..." (Dasgupta 1981).
The second initial point that we intend to make is that

although perspectives on the state and economy in north India have gone through radical changes—and in many ways the new perspectives run parallel to and devoid of positive interaction with persisting stereotypes in textbooks—the image of the early Indian state, which is a carryover from certain strands of both colonial and nationalist historiography (Lorenzen 1982, Chattopadhyaya 1983), remains a key element even in the new perspectives. In other words, what is perceived as the early north Indian state remains, in its stable structure or in its crisis, a key agency to explain, at least at an initial phase, changes which took place from the Gupta period onward. This is not to say that in the new perspectives the state is perceived as a type of 'Oriental Despotism' or that monarchical achievements continue to be correlated with societal progress and stability. What is meant is that in its abstraction, the early Indian state continues to be perceived as a static structure with a stable territorial base. Therefore, notions like 'decentralization' or 'segmentation', to denote disintegration of the structure, and therefore an inferior political order, figure frequently in writings on the period. We shall return to this point in the course of our discussion to show how such notions are used to characterize the nature of the state in the period which we focus on in this essay.

II

Before we take up for detailed discussion the themes which have come to figure more prominently than others in recent writings on the state and economy in north India (400-1200), it is also necessary to make a few points regarding the dominant conceptual framework within which the major writings on the period may be located. Again, even at the risk of making a rather simplistic generalization, it may be stated that two key concepts constituting this framework are those of 'feudalism' and 'medievalism.' The new perspectives thus dispense with conventional ways of periodizing Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British; they further endeavour to avoid equating the conventional scheme of periodization with Ancient, Medieval and Modern. It is stressed that the terms used for periodization need to be connotative and should not

simply correspond to a chronological span. By associating the
advent of 'medievalism' with 'feudalism'—an association
which is suggested by the way both 'feudalism' and the
transition to the medieval period are located in the pre-twelfth
century period (Ray 1967, Sharma R. S. 1974a)—recent perspec-
tives too use concepts which are derived from and are
essential ingredients of European historiography. Some clarifi-
cation will be in order here. When the point is made that
recent writings on the period between 400-1200 are character-
ized by the use of such concepts as 'feudalism' and
'medievalism' which are borrowings from European historiog-
raphy, it should not be taken to mean that such borrowings
did not take place previously. The difference is that values
attached to these concepts, in their uses in the Indian context,
have changed over time. For example, analysis of the use of
the term 'feudalism' in the Indian context (Altekar 1972,
Bandyopadhyaya 1980) will bear out that it has had to bear
the burden of wide-ranging connotations, but tending, gener-
ally, to signify political decentralization (Chattopadhyaya 1983).
The same concept is now taken to relate to a particular type
of 'social formation' which, according to one understanding, is
defined "by elements such as the form of labour process
(determined by the extent of bondage and production for
market), the manner of extraction of surplus (e.g. land-tax,
rent) and the system of distribution of the surplus (property
rights) ... Marc Bloch would add to these, as in his well-
known definition of feudalism, some purely political and even
cultural elements as well" (Habib   1985, 23).

Despite this definition, it need not be understood that all
those who write on A.D. 400-1200 in terms of the idea of 'social
formation', project exactly identical ideas regarding the state
and economy during that period. Broadly speaking, combined
with the notion of 'social formation' it is the seminal empirical
writings of Henri Pirenne (1925, 1936, 1939) and Marc Bloch
(1965) which have perhaps served as models for those who
began seriously working out empirical validation of 'feudal-
ism' as a social formation in Indian history. This may explain
the prominence accorded to features perceived as constituting
the essence of feudalism, which figure somewhat commonly
in the writings which focus on A.D. 400-1200. With the

continuing enrichment and growth of literature on European feudalism, there have been some corresponding changes in the characterization of state and economy in the Indian feudal phase; this is apparent in the way recent works on European feudalism are cited to elucidate points of change and to draw comparisons (Nandi 1984, Jha D. N. 1987, Editor's Introduction).

What we are trying to clarify from the points made above is that there are, simultaneously, (a) commonality of approach that marks the writings of those who view the period in question (A.D. 400-1200) as representing a social formation different from what characterized the preceding period. This approach envisages analysis of social change, which encompasses changes in state and economy within a framework drawn from European historiography, that is, by considering the change from early historical period to the beginning of the medieval (early medieval) period as somewhat comparable to the transition from classical to early medieval Europe; within this broad framework there are variations and the variations have largely depended on the manner in which changes in the period under discussion (A.D. 400-1200) have been viewed by individual historians. There have, further, been major shifts in the way processes leading to the crystallization of a new social formation have been constructed. Both points can perhaps be made a little more clear by citing, briefly, several major authors whose 'constructs' currently represent the dominant historiography on this period. Ray, who pointed to the emergence of a new state structure and economic order in the regional context of Bengal as part of a pan-Indian phenomenon from the Gupta and post-Gupta times, highlighted a hierarchical political order represented by *sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas*, reduced control over *janapadas* and tenuous bonds with political allies as hallmarks of the new state structure. The new economic order, in his assessment, came to be characterized by local, agrarian economy, largely devoid of commercial enterprise and ethos of the early historical period. Ray equated the crystallization of this order with medievalism, the beginnings of which he assigned to the seventh-eighth century. The state structures in this order were regional, dynastic, sustained by an economic structure which

had become transformed from "money economy to natural economy" (Ray 1950, 1967). D. D. Kosambi's formulation (Kosambi 1956) located the genesis of change—a change which was to reshape the structures of state and economy in a later period—prior to the fourth century. This formulation is articulated in terms of a two-stage theory of Indian feudalism; in this formulation, 'feudalism from above'—an early form of feudalism—denoted a somewhat direct relationship between a paramount ruler and his subordinate, tribute-paying but autonomous rulers, the network of such political relationships existing in a situation marked by the absence of an intermediary land-owning stratum. At its 'second stage', a class of land-owners developed within the village between the state and the peasantry, "gradually to wield power over the local population" (Jha V. 1990).

These initial probings into the possibility of explaining changes in early historical society in terms of a 'feudal' model —as a challenge to the stereotype of absence of basic change in Indian society or to the image of change conceived in terms of dynastic shifts alone—came in for some measure of criticism, and there have been further shifts in efforts, among Indian historians, towards refining the model. An excellent sample of such efforts, which for the first time embodies results of substantial empirical research, is Sharma's *Indian Feudalism*. This work carries over elements of earlier constructs of Indian feudalism as a social formation; at the same time it marks a departure by stressing landgrants as the key factor in the emergence of this social formation (Sharma 1958, 1961, 1965). Despite such and other variations, the perceptions converge on certain points which are considered as essential characteristics of the social formation in terms of which the period between 400-1200 can be adequately understood. We now focus on these essentials in so far as they relate to the study of the state and economy in north India in the period under discussion.

III

The essence of the state structure, beginnings of which are located with varying emphasis in both pre-Gupta and Gupta

periods, may be understood by referring to two interrelated points which feature repeatedly in writings on the period under review : (i) decentralized administration, and (ii) political hierarchy. Both points are posited as marking a sharp contrast to the state structure of the Mauryas (close of the fourth century B.C. to the beginning of the second century B.C.), the perceived contrast being expressed in such positive statements as : "... the Kuṣāṇa political organization did not possess that rigid centralization which characterized the Maurya administrative machinery" (Sharma 1968, 216). Corrosion of centralization acquired a faster pace in the Gupta period. According to one opinion which envisages several stages in the evolution of early Indian polity, "the fifth stage was marked by the process of decentralized administration in which towns, feudatories and military elements came to the forefront in both the Deccan and the north. This was partly neutralised by the emphasis on the divinity of the king. The Kuṣāṇa princes assumed the official title of *devaputra* and instituted the cult of the worship of the dead king, and the Sātavāhana princes came to be compared to deified epic heroes. The last age, identical with the Gupta period, may be called the period of proto-feudal polity" (Sharma 1968, 308).

The processes which worked towards administrative decentralization are essentially seen to have derived from : (i) the practice of making landgrants along with administrative privileges, and (ii) the breakdown of the state's monopoly over the army. It is thus stressed that the beneficiaries who received grants of land from kings and their feudatories were given a wide range of fiscal and administrative immunities (Sharma 1965 passim; 1968, 253 ff.) and the immunities were such that : "In grants, from the time of Pravarasena II Vākāṭaka onwards (fifth century A.D.), the ruler gave up his control over almost all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, forced labour, and all hidden treasures and deposits." The administrative concomitant of these fiscal immunities was that the "donor abandoned the right to govern the inhabitants of the village that were granted" (Sharma 1968, 253-54). The image of a decentralized administrative apparatus, or, more appropriately, of the virtual absence of any administrative apparatus, comes through most

vividly in the following statement: "The function of the collection of taxes, levy of forced labour, regulation of mines, agriculture, etc., together with those of the maintenance of law and order, and defence, which were hitherto performed by the state officials, were now step by step abandoned, first to the priestly class, and later to the warrior class" (Sharma 1968, 255). That the decay of state power was comprehensive is also suggested, it is believed, by the breakup of the army into "small police garrisons" (Kosambi 1956; 1959, 284) as also through the process of the emergence of virtually autonomous military officials (Sharma 1968, 241). At the level of commerce, the departure from the Mauryan pattern of rigidly state-controlled commerce and industry is seen in the emergence of autonomous *nigamas* and *śreṇis*, both connoting corporate bodies which regulated their own affairs without interference from the state. The autonomy of the corporations is again believed to have crystallized by the late Gupta period. An example, often cited, is provided by a set of charters from western India dated to the close of the sixth century (Kosambi 1959). The charters were addressed to a group of traders and granted them various immunities; they exempted them from various dues, "left them free to deal with labourers, herdsmen, etc. and authorised them to impose forced labour on certain artisans. The traders were allowed immunity from the entry of royal officials in their area and from payment of dues and rations for supporting these officials" (Sharma 1968, 253).

Administrative decentralization, manifest in different ways, was linked primarily with the emergence of political hierarchy, which again contrasts sharply with Mauryan bureaucratic centralization and the absence of intermediary layers in the Mauryan political system (Thapar 1973; but for substantially modified view of the Mauryan State, her publications of 1981, 1987).

Political hierarchy is seen as taking a recognizable shape only in the post-Mauryan period. Bureaucratic hierarchy is recognized as a feature of Mauryan political-administrative system, and, in fact, a "pyramidical bureaucratic structure" is seen to have been present in the Mauryan State (Sharma 1968, 286). But political hierarchy, which is suggested by a hierarchy of autonomous or semi-autonomous rulers and therefore

indicative of dispersal of foci of political authority, was a phenomenon believed to have been only post-Mauryan in its origin in north India. Characteristics associated with the emergence of political hierarchy are seen in such designations as *kṣatrapa, mahākṣatrapa, daṇḍanāyaka, mahādaṇḍanāyaka* as also in royal designations like *rājā, mahārājā, rājādhirāja* and so on (Yadava 1968). These designations became much more elaborate and indicative of greater degree of political hierarchy in subsequent centuries. Further, an inscription of the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa period from northwestern India has been cited to show (Yadava 1968, 81) that a *kṣatrapa* (a term originally of Iranian root and more easily recognizable in the form *satrap*) could be both a *mahārājā* and a *grāmasvāmi* (lord of a village). This and other sources are offered as proof of linkage between landlordism and political hierarchy, starting from the village as its base.

More significant development, from the point of view of the crystallization of a highly hierarchized political order, is seen to have taken place from the Gupta period onward. This development is best symbolized in the growth of the order of the *sāmantas*, giving rise, in Indian historiography, to the assumed equivalence of *sāmantavāda* with Indian feudalism. The sharp changes which the term *sāmanta* went through over time underscore fundamental changes in Indian polity, reinforcing the image of a hierarchical political structure. The original meanings of *sāmanta* were: 'being on all sides', 'neighbouring', 'bordering' and so on (Gopal L. 1963a). Profound structural changes in the meaning of the term and their implications for corresponding changes in early Indian polity have been expressed rather forcefully by Kosambi: "In the *Arthaśāstra*, it uniformly means neighbour or dependent neighbouring king. The *Amarakośa* (2.8.2) defines supreme monarch (*adhīśvara*) as a king who has subjugated all neighbouring rulers (*sāmanta*) without exception... on the other hand, *sāmanta* in seventh century and later epigraphs has to be translated as 'feudal baron'." (Kosambi 1959, 283-84). Kosambi's translation of *sāmanta* as 'feudal baron' or his identification of Ḍāmaras of early medieval Kashmir, figuring prominently in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, as 'feudal lords' (Kosambi 1956-57) may be controversial (Chattopadhyaya 1983, 30, f.n.

82), but they have often been cited to add strength to the construct of decentralized and hierarchized feudal polity of early medieval India. It is also envisaged that the term *sāmanta*—and obviously similar other terms—went through further changes in meaning in subsequent centuries; if in the Gupta period "a *sāmanta* was ... a ruler distinct alike from a sovereign king and from a governor" with "... a dual position of superiority over appointed governors and subordination to the Emperor", by about eleventh-twelfth centuries, "... the *sāmantas* were no longer a class of subordinate rulers, but virtually a class of privileged nobles enjoying landed properties" (Gopal L. 1963a; 1989; Yadava 1978, Ch. 3).

The term *sāmanta* only symbolically conveys the impression of multiple foci of political authority from the fourth century onward; it may not adequately portray the situation in which the state system had come to embody a really complex hierarchical structure. Such complexity is indicated both by case studies of several early medieval state systems (Sharma 1965, Chapters 2, 5) and by analyses of extremely significant material found in early medieval texts like the *Aparājitapṛcchā*, a text written in Gujarat in the twelfth century (for relevant analyses, Sharma 1969, Inden 1981). In giving details of how palaces were to be built, the *Aparājitapṛcchā* enumerates nine categories of rulers such as *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, māṇḍalika, mahāsāmanta, sāmanta, laghusāmanta* and so on. In connection with the description of the court of a sovereign ruler, who was a *samrāṭ* holding the titles of *mahārājādhirāja*, and *parameśvara*, the text enjoins that the court ought to be attended on by specific numbers of *maṇḍaleśvaras, māṇḍalikas, mahāsāmantas, sāmantas, laghusāmantas* and *caturaśikas* or lords and rulers of eighty-four villages. If one starts from the lord of the village as the base of the political structure, then the expanse of the hierarchy extending up to the levels of the *mahāsāmantas* and *mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras* and finally up to the *mahārājādhirāja* was indeed vast. This also makes intelligible the point why such a construct of hierarchy led a school of historians to refer to this structure as composed of 'feudal ranks' (Sharma 1969, 6) and as representing 'feudal polity' (Mazumdar B. P. 1960, Sharma 1965, Choudhary 1960, Asopa n.d., Gopal 1963c, Yadava 1973).

IV

In a casual remark, attempting to establish a linkage between the new state structure and the new economic order in the initial phase of the period under discussion, Kosambi had asserted : "Administrative decentralization through *sāmantas* accelerated the conversion of communal property into feudal property" (Kosambi 1959, 284). This direct correlation has a number of implications which however were not clearly spelt out by Kosambi, and, in any case, the growing historiography on the pattern of economy developing from the Gupta period onward has brought out dimensions which have never been discussed before. It is therefore necessary, as we have done in our discussion of the state structure, to identify the key elements in what is considered to be the new pattern of economy, try and understand the processes leading to their appearance and further examine how other features of economy, suggested by the empirical evidence of the period, relate to these key elements.

It seems that there are, again, two key elements in the new economic order, in the manner in which they are projected in the dominant historiography of the period, and that they are interrelated : (i) the new economic order is dominated by the appearance and exploitative functions of landed intermediaries, (ii) the new pattern of economy, predominantly rural—agrarian in character, centred around self-sufficient village as the unit of production and distribution, and, at the same time, is characterized by agrarian expansion on a substantially large scale. Both points need some elaboration.

The emergence of landed intermediaries and the structural changes this phenomenon brought about in agrarian relations are both taken to be suggested by the growing number of landgrants which record transfer of landed properties to various categories of donees (Sharma 1958, 1965, 1985, etc.). Gifts of land were indeed known in early sources, and later Vedic and Buddhist canonical texts and even, for that matter, Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* mentions them. The point, however, has been stressed that whereas the early gifts of land were essentially gifts of resources from the gifted land without

disturbing the existing agrarian order, landgrants of the Deccan of the Sātavāhana, Kṣatrapa and early Pallava times and then from the Gupta period onward were much more comprehensive in so far as privileges bestowed on the recipients of grants were concerned. It was this set of privileges which disturbed and finally transformed the existing agrarian order. In order to understand the proposal for a new pattern of economy crystallizing from the Gupta period, it is necessary to dwell on the suggested changes brought about by the practice of landgrants.

To summarize varied viewpoints on the practice in the early historical context, landgrants were essentially a device for payment for services in which payment in cash became an impossibility because of dwindling money circulation. Secondly, the practice emerged as a resolution to the crisis which state power had begun to face in keeping the producing social classes under control. Landgrants, with administrative-coercive powers geared to surplus extraction from producing classes, were a device to keep the exploitative machinery of the state working (Sharma 1988a).

The privileges bestowed on the recipients of land, which could be given not only by the sovereign king but also by his feudatories, officials and others, were varied, but an average set of privileges would tend to consist of the following : (i) they stipulated enjoyment of different types of resources, the major among which were produce from the land, cash and unpaid labour. In fact, it seems that the range of resources which donees received through landgrants became wider in the early medieval period than those of the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods (Sircar 1969); (ii) they were permanent or at least tended to become permanent and by giving ownership rights to the donees, they reduced the original cultivators to the position of tenants who could even suffer eviction, (iii) they further stipulated non-interference from state officials, (iv) by granting legal and administrative immunities, to the extent of permitting donees to impose fines and levy new taxes, they made the donees autonomous and decentralized the authority of the state.

Distinctions are made in historical writings on this period between what are called religious grants and secular grants,

and from studies available, it would seem that beginning with grants to Buddhist monasteries, other religious establishments and to individual *brāhmaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* in groups, these *devadāna* (that is, 'given to gods') and *brahmadeya* ('given to *brāhmaṇas*') grants extended in later centuries to the creation of *agrahāras*, *śāsanas*, landed estates of temples, *maṭhas* and other types of monastic establishments. Chronologically analyzed, the number of such grants and their distribution over space at the pan-Indian level were far more extensive in the early medieval period than in the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods. Secular grants or grants given to officials, kinsmen, merchants, armymen, subordinate rulers and other categories have also been discussed and implications of relevant secular landgrant terms like *bhoga, grāsa, prasāda, vṛtti*, etc. (Sharma 1961, Gopal K. K. 1962-63, 1963-64, 1964, Yadava 1966, 1973) analysed in the context of what has been termed the 'Indian Feudal Formation.' It may be mentioned that in the context of such grants in particular, the paucity of cash in a situation of sluggish money circulation has been emphatically noted, in order to make intelligible the process of land substituting cash as a form of remuneration.

The varied nature of landgrants representing a major phenomenon in the agrarian situation has been taken to suggest that while the process of change to a new economic order may not have been as simple as in Kosambi's formulation (that is, conversion of communal property into feudal property through the agency of the *sāmantas*), the practice of landgrants nevertheless brought in the layer of intermediaries between the state and the producing classes and this undermined the condition of the peasantry. This 'subjection of the peasantry' (Sharma 1965, 1985, Yadava 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980, Habib 1982, Mukhia 1981, 1985)—considered to be one key characteristic of early medieval economy—is reflected, it is believed, in : (i) the superior rights given to the grantees making the cultivators subject to their will, (ii) restrictions on their movements, as in many cases cultivators were made over to donees along with land granted to them or were physically attached to monastic estates (Gopal L. 1963d), (iii) the emergence of *viṣṭi* or forced labour (Rai 1976, 1981) as an important institutional development and the right given to the

recipients of land to exact forced labour, and (iv) the wide range of taxes, exactions or levies to which the peasantry was subjected.

Historians writing on early medieval India have in this connection drawn attention to cases of peasant protest, which are mentioned in records from different parts of India. These are considered to have been reactions to the system of peasant oppression, built into the early medieval pattern of economy. These stray but significant cases of localized, rural-level protest are found more in the records of the Deccan and the south (Jha D. N. 1979, Nandi 1984); in the context of north India too such protest was not altogéther absent. In fact, it is believed that the most major event of this kind is represented by the revolt of the powerful cultivating *kaivartta* caste of Bengal, figuring as the central theme in Sandhyākara Nandi's *Rāmacarita*, a eulogy of Pāla king Rāmapāla. The revolt, caused by oppressive taxation and by the deprivation of the *kaivarttas* of their land, was successful to the extent of displacing the sovereign Pāla rulers from power for several years (Sharma 1988a).

The other key feature of the structure of economy is epitomized in the concept of 'the self-sufficient village' which views villages as individually self-sustaining units, devoid of channels connecting them with other units of production or with centres of commodity exchange (Kosambi 1956, Sharma 1965). To state the argument in simple terms, the emergence of the village in the early medieval context as a self-sustaining economic unit is traced to the decline of commerce and consequently of commercial groups (represented by such *varṇa* as *vaiśya*) and of urban centres of early historical India. Attempts have been made to document the decline of early historical urban centres which developed in different stages starting from the middle of the first millennium B.C. by analyzing phases of settlement at almost one hundred and thirty sites distributed throughout the subcontinent (Sharma 1973, but more particularly 1987). The early historical urban centres, of various types, were not only major centres of settlement but were political centres and centres of production and exchange as well. They were further linked with one another through extensive networks of routes. Attempts to

analyze the decline of these urban centres, including such major ones as Takṣaśilā in northwest India, Kauśāmbi in middle Ganga basin and Pāṭaliputra and Campā in the lower half of the middle Ganga basin, in addition to numerous similar major and minor historical settlements in different regions of India, highlight the fact that both in terms of structural activities and other forms of archaeological assemblage, the urban centres reached an apogee of growth in the pre-Gupta period, and their steady decay in Gupta and post-Gupta times naturally had adverse effects on the economy, with the shifting of almost all productive activity to rural areas. This general pattern of 'decay' is in turn attributed to the breakdown in India's profitable long-distance trade with the world dominated by Rome in one direction and by China in the other.

It is therefore suggested that the consequent 'ruralization' and 'localization' of economy, in combination with the emergence of hierarchized layers of landed intermediaries, radically transformed the character of the economy, at least between circa 400 and circa 1000. At one level, the decline of urban centres as settlements of a composite population, of crafts and artisanal production, and of exchange, resulted in migration of both non-producing groups such as *brāhmaṇas* as well as artisanal groups to rural areas and to expansion of rural settlements on a considerable scale. Rural expansion, assumed on the basis of references to grants of specific villages or village land to *brāhmaṇas* and temples, implied also rural stratification and breakdown of its communal structure. It has been stressed that since transfer of land-rights to donees specifically included rights over pastures, forest lands and other items hitherto enjoyed by the village community, landgrants completely broke up communal rights (Sharma 1985, 1987) and led in many cases to the emergence of substantially large estates, held individually or on behalf of temples or monasteries. In one sense, therefore, Kosambi's formulation of communal property being transformed into feudal property, although through a differently perceived historical process, appears to be repeated in recent writings as well.

Other dimensions of the economic pattern of the period,

circa 400 to circa 1200, follow from the key features discussed above. Since the image of the economy, as it has been generally reconstructed, is that of overall decadence and of sharp stratification, it extended further to the degradation of the economic and corresponding social status of the producing classes in general. If the peasantry was subject, so too were the artisanal groups, and social historians working on the early medieval period point to : (i) the decline in the ritual status of many artisanal groups, this possibly deriving from the fact that artisanal groups were now rurally localized and made subservient to landholding classes (for the suggestion that this led to the appearance of the *jajmani* system, Sharma 1987) and (ii) the lowering of the status of many artisanal groups who now swelled the ranks of the untouchables. In other words, the dominant brahmanical ideology, which spread in space as a result of landgrants to the non-labouring class of *brāhmaṇas*, ranked different economic activities ritually and generally regarded artisanal manual labour as impure. While there may have been a great measure of ambivalence regarding such groups as the *rathakāra* since they are found enjoying even high status in early medieval south India (Jha V. 1973), the time span, circa 600-1200, seems to mark the most crucial phase in the growth of untouchability (Jha 1975, Jaiswal 1978). It was in this phase that a number of social groups such as the *carmakāra* (leather worker), *rajaka* (washerman), bamboo-worker and basket-maker and new categories of ethnic groups came to be regarded as untouchables (Jha V. 1978, 1979). Within the framework of the concept of *varṇasaṃkara*, they were branded as *asat* and *adharmasaṃkara*. It has been mentioned that even the blacksmiths, who were among the important tax payers of the state till the Gupta period, were listed as *antyajas* by the early medieval period (Ojha 1979). General degradation of human status, taken as a mark of the condition of feudal decline, seems to have related to other groups too, and one opinion attempts to stress that "with the rise of the feudal complex in Indian society, trade and traffic (illegal trade) in slaves got an added impetus from the prevailing internal conditions too" (Srivastava 1978).

It needs to be emphasized however that there are many points of variation even within this perception of early

medieval economy. One point which may be mentioned as relevant, given the chronological focus of this essay, is that while the time-span roughly from the fourth-fifth to the ninth-tenth century is generally looked upon as a period of decline, the post-1000 span of two centuries is seen to mark the beginnings of departure from the enclosed, rural economy in the forms of crystallization of new networks of exchange, formation of trade guilds and a new phase of money production and circulation. It was because the pattern of economy in the post-1000 phase was perceived to be different from the pattern in the pre-1000 phase that Sharma, writing in 1965, was inclined to take eleventh-twelfth centuries as marking both the climax as well as the decline of the feudal formation in Indian history. Other opinions differ with regard to the duration of 'Indian feudal formation', (Jha D. N. 1979, see also discussions in Mukhia 1981, 1985), and indeed comparatively recent writings within the conceptual framework of Indian feudalism have pointed to the potentialities of growth in rural economy in the overall feudal context (Nandi 1984, Sharma 1985, 1987). There is thus evidence of agrarian expansion, of technological innovations in irrigation and in the introduction of new crops, of demographic growth and rise in the number of early medieval towns. The historiographical trend has generally been to divide the time span (400-1200) into two phases, although the division can hardly be expected to correspond to the earlier division of political chronology, between the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

V

We have so far been trying to underline that historical writings on the period between 400 and 1200 have, in recent times, been dominated by the concept of Indian feudalism, although we should at the same time add that a great volume of writings on this period does not use any conceptual framework at all and does not go beyond compilation of information. The use of the term 'feudalism' has also radically differed in recent writings from the way it was used previously; however, it still largely conforms to the changing image of European feudalism. In other words, despite the use

of the term 'Indian feudalism', to posit it as a definitive variant, there have been persistent attempts to find in Indian society and institutions such features as decentralized polity, subject peasantry and serfdom, urban and commercial decline —as well as a subsequent phase of growth—which, taken together, would place Indian feudalism in close proximity to the image of European feudalism. The discussion which we have made so far was directed toward a search for the major characteristics of state and economy which the construct of Indian feudalism has offered and there can be no doubt at all that this construct has both generated a considerable volume of empirical research and underlined the need to search for a framework for social change in Indian history.

Nevertheless, it is in order now to show—with a view to countering the tendency to turn fruits of recent historical research into axiomatic truths and particularly the facile practice of extending the construct of Indian feudalism to all conceivable contexts—that the notion of Indian feudalism has come up against strong resistance, and mainly on two counts : (i) its inappropriateness for analyzing social formation in pre-modern Indian history, and (ii) the empirical inaccuracies embedded in the construct. We shall limit our analysis of the critique of Indian feudal formation mainly in so far as it relates directly to writings which are available on state and economy in north India between 400 and 1200.

The major critique of 'Indian feudalism' as a concept appropriate for understanding pre-modern social formation derives from the idea that taking a loose set of attributes to designate a formation as 'feudal' would unhappily and unnecessarily widen the scope of the definition of feudalism and take its key attribute away from it. If 'structured dependence' between lords and peasants, embedded in a specific agrarian production process, was the essence of a feudal formation, then empirical evidence of such dependence in the period when Indian feudalism is believed to have crystallized is considered absent and, in fact, in relation to the production process of the period, the peasantry experienced a considerable measure of freedom. The definition of Indian feudalism is characterized as essentialist, neither meaningfully explaining the real condition of the peasantry in early

medieval or medieval India nor linking the two segments of the medieval period in Indian history as understandable progression from one phase to another. Empirically, if landgrants created oppressive conditions for the peasantry in the early medieval period, then the equally or more oppressed condition of the peasantry under the Sultanate and later, when such landgrants were absent, does not appear intelligible; it also does not appear intelligible how oppressed peasantry in the condition of general economic decadence of the early medieval period remained in a static condition in the medieval period when the overall structure of economy, vastly commercialized, 'industrialized' and monetized, had gone through radical changes (for articulating this line of criticism, Mukhia 1981, 1985; however, other views in Byres and Mukhia 1985).

So far as writings specific to the period under discussion are concerned, there have been persistent debates among historians over a wide range of issues, particularly those relating to the overall nature of economy of the early medieval period (for example, see writings of Sircar 1966, 1969, 1982, also, response from Sharma 1974b). One set of disputes may be taken to have centred around interpretations of key terms which occur in landgrant inscriptions. It has for example been shown that landgrants actually refer to many types of land transfers and not all of them need be taken as examples of grants. Further, the landgrants, instead of conferring ownership to the grantee, may simply have implied transfer of revenue. The same type of controversy extends to examining whether any contractual element was present in the grants, whether land granted can be considered to be of the nature of 'fiefs' of European feudalism and whether the terms used in landgrant inscriptions can justify the way they have been taken to mean transfer of cultivators, artisans and merchants to grantees. Such and other controversies which to an extent derive from the difficulty of finding appropriate English equivalents of the terms used (one such example being *sāmanta*) are, by their very nature, unlikely to be satisfactorily resolved. Similarly, while substantial criticism has been offered against the image of a 'closed, natural' economy, it is equally unlikely that there would be consensus on when economy was more closed and when it was more vibrant with external

linkages. It has, for example, been shown that urban centres of early historical India did not all necessarily decline; in fact, in many regions, in addition to many urban centres continuing into the early medieval period, there was a continuing process of the emergence of new urban centres (Chattopadhyaya 1974, 1976). Similarly, in a recent publication dealing with the monetary history of early medieval north India between the eighth and the thirteenth century, it has been argued, on the strength of coin hoard finds, metrology and metal composition, that money production and money circulation in the area between Afghanistan and middle Ganga basin and between Kashmir and northern Deccan extending to the western coast, were in full spate in the period, and if certain series, because of their unstable metrological and metal standards had only limited circulation, there were other—more stable—series which circulated beyond narrow localities. There were thus both local and inter-local networks of exchange in operation, giving lie to the assumption that post-Gupta economy was a moneyless, closed economy (Deyell 1990, Mukherjee 1982, for a different view, Srimali 1989).

The points which both polemical and empirical writings make against the 'Indian feudalism' formulation, particularly with regard to the period 400-1200, generally relate, as we have mentioned earlier, to the pattern of economy that it has reconstructed; there have not been many serious attempts so far to re-examine this 'feudal' postulate of a 'decentralized' state structure in relation to a 'closed, natural economy.' Secondly, by and large, the critique of this dominant historiography, which characterizes the period under discussion as feudal by identifying a set of attributes, has been essentially of the nature of the negation of these attributes. In other words, there is urgent need both to re-examine: (i) whether the major features which are taken to characterize north Indian state and economy between 400 and 1200 can be interpreted through a perspective different from the current construct of Indian feudalism, (ii) whether what have been projected as the major features of the period need to be re-ordered in relation to other features. The point really is not of empirical validity but of seeing which developments can be considered more significant, seen from the perspective of the

long-term processes in Indian history. We shall close this last section of the essay with an examination of the construct of Indian feudalism, in so far as it relates to north Indian state and economy, from the point of view of causation, and finally with a statement as to whether it is possible to project an alternative viewpoint regarding the theme from available historical writings. For the purpose of developing the exercise into an argument, it will be necessary to refer again to some of the points discussed earlier.

An examination of Indian feudalism as a dominant historiographical position has to start by asking two interrelated questions: Why did Indian feudalism develop and when? Since opinions of individual historians do vary widely, a search for answers to these questions may be confined to the writings of some major exponents of the 'feudalism' viewpoint and to identifying only the major ideas.

A. In what we may characterize as the initial phase in the formation of the viewpoint, the origins of political feudalism were perceived as represented by decentralized state structure through the growth of political hierarchy, and in this sense, the proto-feudal phase was located in the pre-Gupta period. The origins of feudal economy were seen in the growth of the practice of landgrants with administrative rights, corroding the authority of the state. Even at this stage, the construct suffered from the inconsistency of two irreconcileable parallels: whereas hierarchized polity came to be essentially represented by the growth of the *sāmanta* order, the recipients of land with administrative authority, who could be expected to have corroded the authority of the state and decentralized it, were *brāhmaṇas* and religious establishments.

B. The second idea, which substantially differs from the idea of landgrants generating a new social formation but which seeks to provide an explanation for the genesis of the practice, is articulated in the form of a construct of 'social crisis.' This 'social crisis' is presumed to have brought an earlier social formation to an end. The essence of the earlier social formation, which it is necessary to grasp in order to understand the process of the creation of a new formation, is stated in the following terms: "In spite of the presence of some rich landowners in the Buddhist birth stories, in ancient

times we do not find unequal distribution of the chief means of production, i.e., land, on any large scale. We however find unequal distribution of agricultural products as well as *the forcible use of the labour power of the śūdras* (italics added) for the cultivation of land and other purposes. A good portion of the produce of the land went as taxes to the rulers who were called *kṣatriyas*. Another portion went to the *brāhmaṇas* and other religious elements in the form of gifts. For supplying labour to the three higher *varṇas* including the *vaiśya* peasants and merchants, the *śūdras* were considered to be the common source. But really *śūdra* labour seems to have been utilized more by landowning village communities or individuals comprising the *kṣatriyas* and *brāhmaṇas*, who were exempted from taxes. This kind of social formation in which the *vaiśyas* were the principal taxpayers and *śūdras* supplied the main source of labour was *certainly* (italics added) riven with contradictions" (Sharma, 1988a).

It is believed that these contradictions led to sustained social conflicts. These social conflicts, reflected in the gruesome accounts, in the epics and the *Purāṇas* originally dating from the pre-Gupta age, of the collapse of the social order in the *Kali* age (Yadava 1979, Sharma 1980, 1982), compelled the state to resort to the practice of making landgrants because on its own it was incapable of exacting revenues from its subjects. The assumption, in essence, locates the genesis of a new, feudal, social formation in the crisis of state authority caused by social conflicts. The way the social crisis of the *Kaliyuga* is formulated, by pointing to parallels between *Kaliyuga* social order and the new, feudal, formation makes it both a cause and content of the new formation, which appears somewhat inadmissible logically. More importantly, unlike in the early medieval period, actual historical events suggesting social conflicts of such magnitude as to cause a crisis of state authority in a period in which early historical urban civilization is believed to have reached its peak, remain so far unrecorded.

C. Further, social crisis, corresponding to the crisis of state authority, as an explanation for the genesis of a new social formation, appears structurally different from another hypothesis simultaneously advanced. The hypothesis is that "... the

relapse of a market economy of towns into a subsistence economy of agriculture which followed a widespread decay and desertion of towns from the third Christian century seems to be the key factor in our understanding of the origins of feudalism" (Nandi 1984, 3). Here too the formulation of the hypothesis suffers from internal inconsistencies[1] but what needs to be noted is that as an explanatory model 'urban decay', though implying reduction in the quantum of state's resources, is not the same as persistent social conflicts constituting the collapse of state authority. 'Urban decay', linked to the collapse of long-distance exchange networks (Sharma 1987), may be considered 'external' as compared to the 'internal' explanation represented by social conflicts.

Clearly then, there is no satisfactorily structured argument available as yet for the genesis of Indian feudal formation. As we have suggested earlier, the current construct of Indian feudalism appears to continue to subscribe to the assumed binary opposition, incongruously in the early Indian context, between a centralized state and a decentralized state and between an urban market economy and natural economy. In any case what this construct has bypassed almost totally, in failing to understand their implications for a study of the period 400-1200, are two major processes which characterize Indian history in general : (i) transformation of pre-state society to state society, through what is generally called the process of state formation, and (ii) transformation of tribe into peasant and through this transformation, the positioning of its different segments in the hierarchy of the caste system, within the framework of *varṇa* ideology. It needs further to be

1 Note, for example, the chronologically unclear points made in the two following statements on the same page in a work which deals with the problem of urban decay in early India : (i) "The six hundred years following the third century saw the expansion of the self-sufficient village and the contraction of the urban sector dominated by crafts and commerce" (Sharma 1987, 177). (ii) "In the first part of the early Middle Ages (c. 600-1000) two distinct trends can be discerned. One is the contraction of towns, and the other is the extension of villages (ibid.). Read the above two statements in combination with the following : "The second phase of the urban decay appears after the sixth century, and its beginning synchronizes with the fall of the Gupta empire. This phase was not so widespread as the first one" (ibid. 181).

stressed that these processes were interrelated and that their operation in any phase of Indian history has to be looked at from the regional perspective since the formation of historical/cultural regions in India derived largely from how these features became major in varying space-time contexts.

It is becoming increasingly evident, through recent writings which attempt to break away from the conventional genealogical and chronological reconstruction, that the period 400-1200 was extremely crucial from the point of view of the formation of local and regional states. Even a recent work which stresses the decline of early urban centres as a necessary background for the emergence of early medievalism, does not fail to note that "... the period c. 400-650 seems to have been particularly important for the rise of new states or kingdoms. Leaving out the imperial state of the Guptas, in this period we can count sixty-nine states spread all over the country. Out of these, forty-eight could be attributed to Maharashtra, eastern Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Bengal. In a way the area in which these states are found formed a continuous zone with gaps. A good part of the zone was a forested plateau largely included in the Vindhyan region" (Sharma 1987, 168). There is no need to take the number mentioned as definitive (Chattopadhyaya 1983, De Casparis 1979) or to think that the process was in operation only between circa 400-650 and not later. Similar analyses may give different pictures of the regional distribution of states in other periods. What is important to note is that there is no causal connection between the appearance of these local level states and the collapse of a pan-Indian or even a major state structure like the Maurya or Gupta; many of these local states were in fact integrated into the loosely structured Gupta Empire. Further, there is nothing to suggest that the appearance of these local states had any connection with the collapse of a pan-Indian urban market economy.

Early historical state formation in India took place around the middle of the first millennium B.C. (Thapar 1984) but many of the implications of later day state formations as a continuing historical process are not as yet clear. It has been shown that new states or new royal lineages could emerge even in areas where states existed previously (Chattopadhyaya

1983) and that it would be an incorrect procedure to use inscriptional evidence referring to different segments of a ruling lineage to reconstruct unilinear regional royal dynasties (Henige 1975). The problem of understanding even the political structure of early medieval or later states therefore still remains quite acute. However, it has been suggested that the emergence of political hierarchy in such open-ended situations may be conceptualized by exploring linkages between stratified local polities and supra-local polities (Chattopadhyaya 1983). These linkages may have been of different kinds and their various dimensions include examining the nature of territorial and land control, ranking and even the nature of social network among ruling lineages. Empirical work, done on the origin of the Rajputs in the early medieval period, which shows that different lineages, both of local and non-local origin, appropriated political power and land, in many cases at the expense of local tribal groups, and came to be forged into a cohesive social-political group, would illustrate one kind of regional state formation process in western India from around the seventh century (Chattopadhyaya 1976). Most local states or royal lineages formed in this period, however, illustrate a process of change from below, in which monarchical genealogy was formed in a tribal region and from a tribal background. The rise of many ruling lineages from about the fifth century onward, of both short and long durations, in the predominantly tribal areas of Orissa has recently been documented (Singh 1990) and these minor states have to be distinguished from the early historical state of Kalinga, located in the nuclear region of the Mahanadi basin (Seneviratne 1980-81). Local or regional state formation, from such obscure bases, as a continuous historical process is illustrated not only by the early medieval state of the Candellas of Bundelkhand, presumably from a Gond background, or the ephemeral Chindaka-Nāga lineage in that 'zone of isolation', Bastar, but perhaps more effectively by the late medieval Pudukkottai State of Tondaiman rulers who were of Kallar origin. The Kallars, described as thieves in early Tamil literature and as criminals under the Criminal Tribes Act, emerged in the late medieval period as a royal caste and as the chief controllers of the resources of the region (Dirks 1990).

The social mobility implied in the movement of the segment of a tribe toward the formation of a royal genealogy or even the formation of a new state in a nuclear area was closely linked with the problem of legitimation (Kulke 1976, 1977, 1978, 1982, Chattopadhyaya, 1976, 1983). The emergence of a wide range of ruling elites, conceptualized through the use of such terms as *'kṣatriyization'* and 'Rajputization', explains the close link between the brāhmaṇical form of monarchical ideology as well as with *bhakti* ideology and the new states. One excellent example of this, which has been explored in detail, is the growth of the major state structure of the Coḍa-Gaṅgas of Orissa from the eleventh century; its linkage with the cult of Jagannātha which grew into a regional cult and the patronage extended to brāhmaṇical settlements in early medieval Orissa, are illustrative of a pattern, which despite variations, was all too common throughout early medieval India. The grants of land to *brāhmaṇas* and temples, looked at from these perspectives, can then be explained not in terms of the collapse of the state structure but in exactly the opposite way : in terms of the dimension of legitimation of state structure (Chattopadhyaya 1983)[2]. This is why, although they were present in the early historical period, they became so numerous during Gupta and post-Gupta times. Landgrants need not be considered as the major mode of agrarian exploitation either. For one thing, we do not know the percentage of land, in relation to the total cultivable land, held by the grantees in any point of time between 400 and 1200. Secondly, it is clear that peasantry in many regions like Bengal was already highly stratified in the Gupta and post-Gupta times; this is clear from epigraphical references to such

2 It is interesting that David Shulman, who is not directly concerned with the problem of early medieval state and economy, has come up with the following statement: "... however much the Brahmin may vaunt his purity and independence, his historical reality is one of constant compromise —above all through the acceptance of royal gifts. The vast numbers of landgrants to the Brahmins throughout the South, right up to the beginning of the modern period, attest to the strength of this pattern and to the royal need for Brahmin legitimization which underlays it," David Shulman, "The Enemy within : Idealism and Dissent in South Indian Hinduism," in *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Dissent in India*, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt, et al. (Mouton Publishers, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1984), 16.

categories as *kuṭumbin, mahattara, mahāmahattara, mahāpradhāna* and so on (Yamazaki 1982, Chattopadhyaya 1990). In such an already stratified rural society, it would be anachronistic to think in terms of the existence of communal property or communal rights in land and its subsequent breakup because of landgrants. Thirdly, the transformation of tribal bases into bases of local or regional states could both marginalize as well as peasantize tribal groups as happened in the case of the Ābhīras, Gurjaras, Bhillas and Meḍas in Rajasthan (Chattopadhyaya 1976, 1990) and would in any case bring in the complexities of a hierarchical caste system in a situation in which the social order was previously kin-based.[3] That transformation of tribal groups into peasants did take place, in the early medieval period, is documented, among other regions, for the Brahmaputra valley in Assam where land grant evidence has been analyzed to suggest peasantization of several tribal groups (Lahiri 1990). The significance of this transformation on a wide scale is brought out in the following analysis of a relevant part of the *Manusmṛti*, which is assigned to a date later than A.D. 700 : "In order to assimilate numerous aboriginal tribes and foreign elements Manu made a far greater use of the fiction of *varṇa-saṃkara* (intermixture of *varṇas*) than was done by his predecessors. In the majority of instances the mixed castes were lumped with the *śūdras* in respect of their hereditary duties .... They pursued their old occupations and were possibly taught new methods of agriculture which gradually turned them into tax-paying peasants" (Sharma 1980, 240-41 and Appendix I).

One other crucial development of the early medieval period, when looked at from the perspective of regions, may be identified as the emergence of nodes in the form of political centres or exchange centres or both. Epigraphical references to such centres, many of which were definitely of urban dimension, steadily increased from the ninth century, and as in the early historical period, there were hierarchies among

---

3 This process too has to be viewed as a long-term one, and the following statement, despite its sounding like a cliché, should be of some relevance to the early medieval context : "The process of transformation of tribal groups into castes is the passage from equality to hierarchy", Robert Deliége, *The Bhils of Western India* (National, New Delhi, 1985), Preface.

them (Chattopadhyaya 1974, 1976). In regions like Rajasthan and Gujarat, the proliferation of such nodes and linkages between them resulted in intra-regional and inter-regional movement of resources, and apart from growth in commerce (Chattopadhyaya 1985, Jain 1990) an interesting development of this process is viewed as the crystallization of a number of merchant lineages in early medieval western India (Chattopadhyaya 1985). These developments, in combination with the fact that this was also the initial phase of the formation of Rajput polity, should point to the need to introduce the regional dimension in any analysis of the early medieval period.

The argument which we have been trying to develop from available historical writings, mainly on the theme and the period under discussion, may be expressed in a few points:

(i) The formation of monarchical polities, both local and supra-local, was an important historical process of the period, not necessarily implying decentralization. The major mode of the growth of political hierarchy was the formation of linkages between different levels of polity.

(ii) Grants of land reflected royal legitimation and were not the sole agency for domination in rural society.

(iii) Rural expansion and peasantry formation were processes associated with the emergence of local states. There were stratified peasantries in all nuclear regions by the Gupta period and their ranks swelled, with different degrees of stratification, with the transformation of tribes into peasant castes. Expansion of rural settlements was thus not conditional upon the decline of and demographic movements from towns.

(iv) Subjection of peasantry as a blanket concept, implying the existence of the peasantry as one category and landgrantees as exploiters as another, needs to be changed to examining the actual compositions of producing as well as elite groups within the frameworks of state structures. This needs to be done because in the predominantly agrarian states of the period, the two-way linkages between different levels of polity, from the village society to the apex power, could be and were indeed mediated by various groups, including peasant groups, with access to land and power (Chattopadhyaya 1990).

Some final comments. Perhaps it should be stressed again that the concept of 'Indian feudalism' broke away not only from conventional methods of history-writing but also, at the same time, from 'Imperialist' and 'Nationalist' assumptions regarding Indian history. In doing so, it not only parted ways with earlier ideologies (Anderson 1979, O'Leary 1989), but itself took a definitive ideological position (Inden 1990). This becomes clear when one juxtaposes Kosambi's stated historical approach to be Marxist with his own rejection of Marx's formulation regarding India (Kosambi 1956). It has been noted earlier that 'Indian feudalism' thus emerged as a method for working out a pattern of social change in early historical India, comparable to what is available from European historiography. However, during the process of empirical research and 'inflation' of the concept, the construct of 'Indian feudalism' has begun to acquire a stereotyped image, particularly in its failure to accommodate long-term dynamics of change in Indian history. The point is : if there is need to look at change in early Indian history, it is necessary that historians too occasionally introduce some change in the way they see the past.

Bibliography*

Agrawala R. C. 1955. *"Dramma* in Ancient Indian Epigraphs and Literature." *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India,* Vol. 17, 2, 64-82.

Altekar A. S. 1972. *State and Government in Ancient India,* Reprint of 3rd edition (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

Anderson P. 1979. *Lineages of the Absolutist State,* (Verso Edition, London), 462-549.

Asopa J. N. (n.d.) *Feudalism in North India (700-1200 A.D.)* (Jaipur : The Institute of Correspondence Studies, University of Rajasthan).

Bandyopadhyaya N. C. 1980. *Development of Hindu Polity and Political Theories,* (ed.) by N. N. Bhattacharyya (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Bloch M. 1965. *Feudal Society,* 2 vols., translated from the French by L. A. Manyon (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Byres T. J. and H. Mukhia (eds.) 1985. *Feudalism and Non-European Societies,* special issue of *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* vol. 12, nos. 2-3 (London : Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.).

Chattopadhyaya B. D. 1973. "Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* Vol. 16, pts. 2-3, 298-316.

———— 1974. "Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India." *The Indian Historical Review,* Vol. I, 2, 203-19.

———— 1976. "Origin of the Rajputs : The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan." *The Indian Historical Review,* Vol. 3, no. 1, 59-82.

———— 1983. "Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India : Problems of Perspective." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 44 session, Burdwan.

———— 1985. "Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval

* Not all entries in the Bibliography, which are considered relevant for the period, have been actually cited in the text; the Bibliography is intended more as an introduction to the literature on the period which is discussed in the text.

Rajasthan." *Social Science Probings*, Vol. 2.4, 413–440.

―――― 1986. "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India : An Overview." In Bhattacharyya S. and Thapar R., (eds.) *Situating Indian History* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press), 8-33.

―――― 1990. *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India* (Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi & Co.).

Choudhary R. K. 1960. "Some Historical Aspects of Feudalism in Ancient India Down to the 14th century A.D., Based Mainly on the Epigraphic Sources." *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 38, pts. 1-3.

Dasgupta K. K. 1981. "Preface" in Majumdar R. C. and Dasgupta K. K., (eds.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. 3, pt. I (A.D. 300-985) (Delhi : Peoples Publishing House).

De Casparis J. G. 1979. "Inscriptions and South Asian Dynastic Tradition." In Moore R. J. ed., *Tradition and Politics in South Asia* (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House).

Deyell John S. 1990. *Living without Silver : The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

Dirks N. B. 1990. "The Original Caste : Power, History and Hierarchy in South Asia." In McKim Marriott (ed.), *India Through Hindu Categories (Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Papers, 5)*, (New Delhi : Sage Publications), 59-77.

Ghosal U. N. 1962. "Economic Conditions." In Majumdar R. C. *et al* (ed.), *The Classical Age*, vol. 3 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), (Second impression).

Gopal K. K. 1962-63. "Feudal Composition of Army in Early Medieval India." *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Vol. 28, pts. 3-4, 30-49.

―――― 1963-64. "Assignments to Officials and Royal Kinsmen in Early Medieval India (c. 700-1200 A.D.)." *University of Allahabad Studies* (Ancient History Section), 75-103.

―――― 1964. "The Assembly of the Sāmantas in Early Medieval India." *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 42, pt. I, 241-50.

Gopal L. 1963a. "Sāmanta - its Varying Significance in ancient India." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain*

and Ireland, 21-37.

—— 1963b. "Coins in the Epigraphic and Literary records of Northern India in the Early Medieval Period." *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. 25, I, 1-16.

—— 1963c. "On Feudal Polity in Ancient India." *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 41.2, 405-13.

—— 1963d. "Quasi-manorial Rights in Ancient India." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 6, 296-308.

—— 1965. *The Economic Life of Northern India, c. A.D. 700-1200*, second edition, 1989 (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

—— 1980. *Aspects of the History of Agriculture in Ancient India*, Varanasi.

Habib I. 1982. "The Peasant in Indian History." General President's Address, Indian History Congress, 43rd session, Kurukshetra.

—— 1985. *Interpreting Indian History* (Shillong : Northeastern Hill University).

Henige D. P. 1975. "Some Phantom Dynasties of Early and Medieval India : Epigraphic Evidence and the Abhorrence of a Vacuum." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 38.3, 525-49.

Inden R. 1981. "Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, Vol. 15, 99-125.

—— 1990. *Imagining India* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell).

Jain V. K. 1990. *Trade and Traders in Western India (A.D. 1000-1300)* (Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

Jaiswal S. 1977. "Caste in the Socio-economic framework of Early India." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 38th Session, Bhuvaneswar.

—— 1978. "Some Recent Theories of the Origin of Untouchability : Historiographical assessment." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39th Session, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 124-136.

—— 1979-80. "Studies in Early Indian Social History : Trends and Possibilities." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, 1-2, 1-63.

Jha D. N. 1967. *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times* (Calcutta : Punthi Pustak).

—— 1979. "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 40th Session, Waltair.

—— 1980. *Studies in Early Indian Economic History* (Delhi: Anupama Publications).

—— 1987. "Preface" and "Editor's Introduction" in D. N. Jha (ed.), *Feudal Social Formation in Early India* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications).

Jha V. 1973. "Status of the Rathakāra in Early Indian History." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 34th Session, Chandigarh, 104-111.

—— 1975. "Stages in the History of Untouchables." *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 2.1, 14-31.

—— 1978. "Position and Status of Bamboo-workers and Basket-makers in Ancient and Early Medieval Times." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39th Session, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 230-240.

—— 1979. "Leatherworkers in Ancient and Early Medieval India." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 40th Session, Waltair, 99-108.

—— 1990. "Ancient Indian Political History: Possibilities and Pitfalls." *Social Scientist*, 18, nos. 1-2 (200-201), 36-54.

Kosambi D. D. 1956a. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot).

—— 1956b. "On the Development of Feudalism in India." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 36, 3-4, 258-69.

—— 1956-57. "Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir." *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (The Sārdhaśatābdī commemoration volume 1804-1954), 108-120.

—— 1959. "Indian Feudal Trade Charters." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2, 281-93.

Kulke H. 1976. "Kshatriyization and Social Change: A Study in Orissa Setting." In Pillai S. D. (ed.), *Aspects of Changing India: Studies in Honour of Professor G. S. Ghurye* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan), 398-409.

—— 1977. "Early State Formation and Royal Legitimation in Late Ancient Orissa." In Das M. N. (ed.), *Sidelights on the History of Orissa* (Cuttack: Vidyapuri), 104-114.

———— 1978. "Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms." In Eschmann A., Kulke H. and Tripathi G. C. (eds.), *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (Delhi : Manohar Publications), 125-38.

———— 1982. "Fragmentation and Segmentation versus Integration? Reflections on the concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History." *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 237-263.

Lahiri B. 1974. *Indigenous States of Northern India (circa 200 B.C. to 320 A.D.)* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta).

Lahiri N. 1990. "Landholding and Peasantry in the Brahmaputra Valley, c. 5th-13th centuries A.D." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 33, 157-168.

Lorenzen D. 1982. "Imperialism and Ancient Indian Historiography." In S. N. Mukherjee (ed.), *India : History and Thought*, (Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham) (Calcutta : Suvarnarekha), 84-102.

Maity S. K. 1957. *Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Period (cir. A.D. 300-550)* (Calcutta : The World Press Private Ltd.).

Majumdar A. K. 1956. *Chaulukyas of Gujarat* (A Survey of the History and Culture of Gujarat from the middle of the Tenth to the end of the Thirteenth century) (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan).

Majumdar R. C. 1962. "Preface." In R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age* (vol 3 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), (Second impression).

Majumdar R. C. and K. K. Dasgupta 1981. *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. 3, pt. I (A.D. 300-985) (New Delhi : Peoples Publishing House).

Mazumdar B. P. 1960. *Socio-Economic History of Northern India (1030-1194 A.D.)* (Calcutta : Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay).

———— 1966. "Merchants and Landed Aristocracy in the Feudal Economy of Northern India (8th to 12th century A.D.)." In D. C. Sircar (ed.), *Landsystem and Feudalism in Ancient India* (Calcutta : Calcutta University), 62-71.

———— 1979-80. "Industries and Internal Trade in Early

Medieval North India." *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vols. 45-46, 230-55.

Morrison B. M. 1970. *Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press).

Mukherjee B. N. 1982. "Commerce and Money in the Western and Central Sectors of Eastern India (c. A.D. 750-1200)." *The Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol. 17, 65-83.

Mukhia H. 1981. "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 3, 273-310.

—— 1985. "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 12, nos. 2-3 (Special Issue edited by Byres T. J. and Mukhia H.) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), 228-250.

Nandi R. N. 1979-80. "Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahmanical Order." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, nos. 1-2, 64-118.

—— 1984. "Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 45th Session, Annamalai.

Ojha A. P. 1979. "Blacksmiths in Ancient and Early Medieval India." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 40th Session, Waltair, 99-108.

O'Leary B. 1989. *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), Chapter 7.

Pirenne H. 1925. *Medieval Cities: Their origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

—— 1936. *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

—— 1939. *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: Allen and Unwin).

Rai G. K. 1976. "Forced Labour in Ancient and Early Medieval India." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 3.1, 16-42.

—— 1981. *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India* (Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House).

Ray N. R. 1950. *Bangalir Itihas (Adi Parva)* (in Bengali), (Third revised edition in two volumes) (Calcutta: Paschimvanga Niraksharata Durikaran Samiti), 1980.

—— 1967. "The Medieval Factor in Indian History." General President's Address, Indian History Congress, 29th Ses-

sion, Patiala.

Seneviratne S. 1980-81. "Kaliṅga and Andhra : The Process of Secondary State Formation in Early India." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 7, 1-2, 54-69.

Sharma R. S. 1958. "Origins of Feudalism in India (c A.D. 400-650)." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. I.3, 297-328.

—— 1961. "Landgrants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India c A.D. 1000-1200." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 4, 70-105.

—— 1965. *Indian Feudalism, c. 300-1200* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta).

—— 1968. *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, second edition, revised and enlarged (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass), chapters 14-16, 18-19.

—— 1969. *Social Changes in Early Medieval India (Circa A.D. 500-1200)*, (The First Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture 1969, Inter-University Board of India and Ceylon, on behalf of Devraj Chanana Memorial Committee, Delhi).

—— 1973. "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta times." *Journal of Indian History*, Golden Jubilee Volume, 135-150.

—— 1974a. "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I, 1, 1-9.

—— 1974b. "Indian Feudalism Re-touched." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I.2, 320-330.

—— 1980. *Śūdras in Ancient India (A Social History of the Lower order down to circa A.D. 600)*, second revised edition (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

—— 1982. "The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis." In Mukherjee S. N. (ed.), *India : History and Thought* (Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham) (Calcutta : Suvarnarekha), 186-203.

—— 1985. "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 12, nos. 2-3 (Special issue edited by Byres T. J. and Mukhia H.) (London : Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), 19-43.

—— 1987. *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000)* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal).

—— 1988a. "Problems of Peasant Protest in Early Medieval India." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, no. 9 (184), 3-16.

—— 1988b. "Metal Money in India (c. 500-c. 1000)." Third Nathaniel Wallich Memorial Lectures (Indian Museum, Calcutta), unpublished mss.

Singh Upinder 1990. "Kings, Brāhmaṇas and Temples in Orissa : An Epigraphic Study (300-1147 C.E.)." (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, Montreal).

Sircar D. C. 1966. "Landlordism Confused with Feudalism." In D. C. Sircar (ed.), *Landsystem and Feudalism in Ancient India* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta), 57-61.

—— 1969. *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records* (Lucknow : University of Lucknow).

—— 1973. *Political and Administrative System of Ancient and Medieval India* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass).

—— 1982. *The Emperor and the Subordinate Rulers* (Santiniketan : Visvabharati).

Srimali K. M. 1989. "Early Indian Coins and Economic History : Trends and Prospects." In Devendra Handa, (ed.), *Ajaya Śrī* (Ajay Mitra Sastri Felicitation Volume), Vol. I (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan), 237-51.

Srivastava O. P. 1978. "Slave Trade in Ancient and Early Medieval India." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39th Session, Hyderabad, Osmania University, 124-36.

Tarafdar M. R. 1978. "Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 4.2, 274-286.

Thakur V. K. 1989. *Historiography of Indian Feudalism : Towards a Model of Early Medieval Indian Economy (c. A.D. 600-1000)* (Patna-New Delhi : Janaki Prakashan).

Thapar R. 1973. *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, second edition (Delhi : Oxford University Press), Chapters 3 and 4.

—— 1981. "The State as Empire." In H. J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik (eds.), *The Study of the State* (The Hague : Mouton Publishers), 409-426.

—— 1984. *From Lineage to State (Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley)* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press).

—— 1987. *The Mauryas Revisited* (Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi &

Company), 1-31.

Yadava B. N. S. 1966. "Secular Landgrants of the Post-Gupta Period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India." In D. C. Sircar (ed.), *Land — system and Feudalism in Ancient India* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta), 72-94.

—— 1968. "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣāna Age." In G. R. Sharma (ed.), *Kuṣāna Studies* (Allahabad : University of Allahabad), 75-97.

—— 1973. *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century* (Allahabad : Central Book Depot).

—— 1974. "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I, I, 18-27.

—— 1976. "Problem of Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex." *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 3. I, 43-58.

—— 1979. "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages." *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 5, nos. 1-2, 31-64.

—— 1980. "The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India." Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 41st Session, Bombay, 1980.

Yamazaki T. 1982. "Some aspects of Land-sale Inscriptions in Fifth and Sixth Century Bengal." *Acta Asiatica* (Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture), No. 43, Tokyo, 17-36.

Index